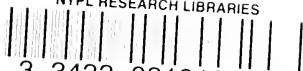


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AS SEEN FROM THE RANKS

A BOY IN THE CIVIL WAR

BY

CHARLES E. BENTON

Of the One Hundred and Fiftieth New York State Volunteers

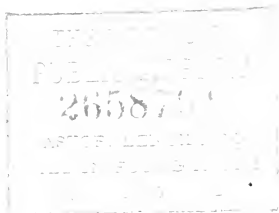
"Which . . . I myself saw, and of which I was a . . . part."

ÆNEID, II, v-vi.

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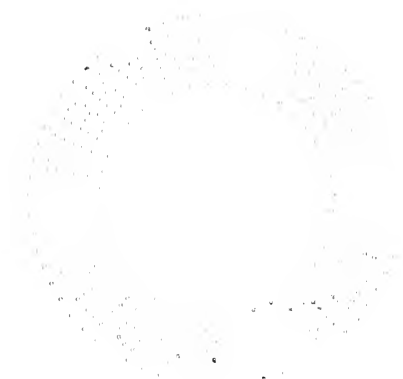
CHARLES E. BENTON

Published, July, 1902

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TO THE FAITHFUL COUPLE WHO
WAITED IN HOPE AND TRUST, AND
ONE OF WHOM PASSED TO THE OTHER SHORE
WHILE THEIR BOY WAS ON HIS WAY HOME,
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR



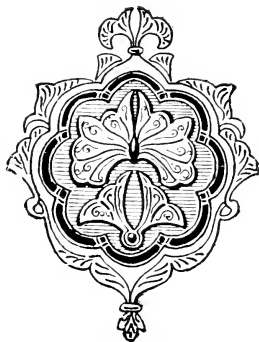


PREFACE

THIS is not a history in any sense, and it can hardly be called a story of the war, which was the greatest war of the age. There have been many wars of longer duration, and there have been slaughterings of weaker races by stronger ones: but this was, from the first, a death grapple between two civilizations represented by branches of the same dominant race, and for four long years the echoes of the picket's rifle never ceased. The desperate and heroic character of the contest is attested by the high proportion of casualties in both armies, which were far in excess of those of any modern European war.

As those who took part in it are fast passing away, I am minded to sketch at random a few recollections of events which came under my own observation and touched my own experience, believing that the impressions which events make upon any personality

have a certain value in themselves. In these sketches I have had constantly in mind that large portion of the public—and may it ever grow larger—who have never witnessed scenes of war, and have written for them rather than for veterans, aiming to present in a series of pen pictures the drama of the civil war as seen from the ranks.





CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	V

I.

THE MAKING OF THE SOLDIER	I
The Dutchess County Regiment—Enlistment —Night Ride to Poughkeepsie—The Muster- ing Camp—Enthusiasm—A Regimental Band —Departure.	

II.

FROM CAMP TO FIELD	12
A Winter in Baltimore—City Camp and Field Camp—Short Rations—Fun and Hardship— A Forced March—Echoes of Battle.	

III.

GETTYSBURG	24
Approaching the Conflict—Meeting the Wounded—On the Field—Entering the Bat- tle—"How Does a Battle Look?"—Work of the Stretcher-Bearers—Opening of the Third Day's Battle—Recovering a Position—Hold- ing Culp's Hill against "Stonewall" Jackson's Veterans.	

IV.

	PAGE
THE CRISIS BATTLE OF THE WAR	37
Pickett's Grand Charge—Daring Courage of the South Breaks against the Firmness of the North—What might have Happened—Hope of Republics.	

V.

AFTER THE BATTLE	45
Emotions in Battle—Quality of Courage—Gettysburg the Greatest Battle, both in Importance and in Loss of Life—Greatest Regimental Losses Known to History.	

VI.

FROM PENNSYLVANIA TO THE POTOMAC	54
Aftermath of the Strife—The Price of Valor—Acres of Dead Men—Phenomena of Death in Battle—Repulsive Appearance of the Battlefield—A Forced March—Again Facing the Enemy.	

VII.

ON THE POTOMAC	64
Scenery of Western Maryland—Interviewing a Scout—Enemy Escaped—Whose the Fault—Night March in Storm and Darkness—Harper's Ferry.	

VIII.

VIRGINIA	74
Entering Confederate Territory—Snicker's Gap, with Feasts of Blackberries—Distant View of the Shenandoah Valley—Sickness in Camp—Coincidence—The Gravestone of a Northern Girl Stops the Bullet Aimed at a Northern Soldier.	

IX.

	PAGE
FROM VIRGINIA TO ALABAMA	88
Forward to the Rapidan—A Military Execution, and how it was Conducted—Moved to the Western Army—Incidents on the Way—Guarding Railroad in Tennessee—Topography of the State.	

X.

A WINTER IN TENNESSEE	99
The Country was then New—Characteristics of the Natives—Did n't Know the Flag—Leaves from an Old Magazine—The Regiment Makes its Own Bread—Interviewing Confederate Prisoners.	

XI.

OVER THE CUMBERLAND MOUNTAINS	110
The Imp in the Attic—Leaving the Winter Camp—Hardening to the Work—Last Camp in Middle Tennessee—Climbing the Mountain Range—Rivalry of Regiments—Nick-a-jack Cave and its Blood-Curdling Traditions.	

XII.

OLD BATTLEFIELDS	124
Lookout Mountain and its Surroundings—Gateway of the Confederacy—Battles and Battlefields of the Previous Year—River of Death—"Fighting Joe" Hooker—General Sherman, then and afterward—What is Meant by "Flanking."	

XIII.

	PAGE
BATTLE OF RESACA	134
<p>Gruesome Preparations—Battle Scene like a Play Set on the Stage—Assault by Colonel (afterward President) Harrison—Our Regiment Engaged—Enemy Repulsed—Confederate Chaplain Slain, with his Sons—Removing the Wounded—Confederate Field Hospital—Bridge Building Hastened.</p>	

XIV.

THE MYSTIC CHORDS OF MEMORY	146
<p>Memories Revived by Old Letters—The Sanitary and Christian Commissions—"Uncle John" Vassar, the Army Missionary—Captain Cruger Wounded—The New Chaplain Wished to See a Battle—"Sherman's Method"—The Recruit and the General—Confederate Letter.</p>	

XV.

THE BATTLE OF NEW HOPE CHURCH . . .	158
<p>Mind-Readers and Coming Events—Popular Misapprehensions—Battles are Fought by the Rank and File—Field Hospitals—Pathetic Scenes—Rebuilding—Advancing—Pursuing.</p>	

XVI.

FROM FIELD TO HOSPITAL	169
<p>With the Ambulances—Caring for the Wounded on the Way—Hardships for the Sick—Temporary Stopping-Place Becomes an All-Summer's Hospital.</p>	

XVII.

HOSPITAL EXPERIENCES	PAGE 180
Peculiarities of the Patients—One who Lost Half his Blood and All his Conceit—Grati- tude of the Wounded—High Rate of Mor- tality—Theory and Practice in Medicine— Confederate Patients.	

XVIII.

HOSPITAL EXPERIENCES (CONTINUED)	189
A Day's Duties—Curious Wounds—A Cheer- ful Patient—Commonness of Death—Walt Whitman's Hospital Pictures—A Berry- ing Excursion—Murders by Guerillas—Return to the Regiment.	

XIX.

ATLANTA	199
Sketch of City Mansion—Death of a Member of the Band—Mystery and Adventure of his Life—A Foraging Tour—Voting for President —Amusements of an Army—Amateur Theat- rical Company.	

XX.

MARCHING THROUGH GEORGIA	208
Evacuation of Atlanta—The City in Flames —The March Begun—Stone Mountain—De- stroying Railroads—Immensity of an Army —Refreshing Change of Diet—Crowds of Slaves.	

XXI.

	PAGE
SHERMAN'S MARCH TO THE SEA	220
"Sherman's Bummers" — Writer Joins the Foraging Party — An Antique of the Race Course—Capture of Milledgeville—A Cala- boose, a Church, and a Liberty Pole—Investi- gating a Prison-Pen.	

XXII.

END OF THE MARCH	232
A Song by the Camp-Fire, and what Followed —A Strayed Premonition—How Railroads were Destroyed—Capturing a Steamboat— In Front of Savannah—Rice Plantations— Lumber for Winter Quarters.	

XXIII.

CAPTURE OF SAVANNAH AND INVASION OF SOUTH CAROLINA	248
Army Suffering with Hunger—Enemy's Pru- dent Retreat — Unparalleled Campaign — Journalistic Enterprise — Crossing the Sa- vannah into South Carolina—Cold Weather again — Skilful Manceuvring — General Kil- patrick's Adventure.	

XXIV.

TRAMPING AND FIGHTING IN THE CAROLINAS	262
The Burning of Columbia — Explosion in Cheraw—Turpentine Factory in Flames— Battle of Averysborough — " <i>Animis Opi- busque Parati</i> "—A Little Panic soon Ended —Bentonville, the Last Battle.	

XXV.

	PAGE
THE DAWN OF PEACE	273
Surrender of Lee and Johnston—Rejoicing Interrupted—Lincoln and Seward—Through Richmond and over Old Battlefields—A Vast Bivouac of the Dead—Washington in Mourning, but Exultant and Rejoicing—The Grand Review.	

XXVI.

THE HOME-COMING	287
A Brief Review of the War—Regiment again at Poughkeepsie—Only a Fragment of the Original Membership Join in the Home-Coming—An Honorable Record—Dutchess County Welcomes its Veterans.	





As Seen From The Ranks

CHAPTER I

THE MAKING OF THE SOLDIER

The Dutchess County Regiment—Enlistment—Night Ride to Poughkeepsie—The Mustering Camp—Enthusiasm—A Regimental Band—Departure.

A MILITARY company is passing with its band. The rhythm of its marching quickstep sways the air with the free insistence with which the waltzer swings his partner through the movements of the dance. The swing and step of the company is so perfect that unconsciously one accepts it as part and parcel of the music. Neither would be complete without the other, but combined they exert a power to coerce, by association, the memory and imagination in the

reproduction of past experiences. In no other way, by no other approach, can Memory's players so quickly assemble on the stage and set thereon the play of past events, as through the sense of hearing.

I stand on the curbstone, jostled and pushed by the throng, but among them marches a silent host seen only by myself. My eyes close and I seem to be part of the passing procession: I am one of the band, marching on the right of the front rank, and with the instrument pressed to my lips it is I who am playing a brave march down the street. I am marching, still playing, through Baltimore; I am toiling on through a rich farming country, over trampled fields of wheat, to a blood-washed battlefield; I am rejoicing in health, then wasted in sickness; I am abounding in plenty, and again suffering with hunger.

Scenes throng in upon me with a rapidity that forbids enumeration, but suddenly my eyes open and there is the company still marching and myself still standing on the curbstone. How the music has tricked me! Those events were more than a third of a century ago, and the nineteenth century was then in its strength of middle life. These

are mere play soldiers, boys who wax their mustaches and play soldier in time of peace. But stop again! my own lip was innocent of beard of any kind, waxed or unwaxed, when I put my name on the enrolment, a signature which meant so much. The men of this military company who look so young to me now, average much older than the rank and file of the army of the Union did in the '60's. That was essentially an army of men in experience, yet a majority of them were but boys in years.

The question of human rights is always vitally connected with political questions, and at the time of which I write it presented itself in a form seemingly much less trivial than it has since. When it finally culminated in a crisis in which the issue was nothing less than national life or death, a wave of patriotic fervor, sometimes deprecatingly referred to as "the war fever," swept over the land. This torrent of feeling was at its flood in 1862, when, at the suggestion of Benson J. Lossing, the historian, there was organized in Poughkeepsie what was known as "The Dutchess County Regiment," afterward officially styled the 150th New York State Volunteers.

The camp was on a certain rocky hillside of Poughkeepsie, and there may still be seen, once a year at the time of the annual reunion, a few gray-haired men who walk out there, look at the place thoughtfully, and then turn back to the city.

Naturally most of the work of organizing was done by those who planned to be commissioned as the regiment's officers, and there was much good-natured rivalry in trying to fill the companies, for until the minimum number was reached no officer could receive his commission. The company in which I had promised to enroll completed its number under the stimulus of this rivalry. When it was learned one Sunday that a certain other company was nearly completed, and expected to be entered and its officers commissioned on the Monday following, there was more than one Paul Revere who rode to distant points in the county where recruiting was going on, or rather where work was being done with that in view.

In my own town, Henry Gridley, soon afterward commissioned 1st Lieutenant of Company A, notified all who had promised to enlist with him, and we were soon started on our thirty-mile ride across the county.

There were plenty who volunteered teams and wagons to carry us thither; in fact more were offered than were needed, and some there were who drove along with us to see the outcome of the rivalry. I remember that we stopped at midnight at the residence of the Examining Surgeon to pass the necessary physical examination, and then resumed our ride. We reached Poughkeepsie some time before daylight in the early days of September. We had accomplished our purpose in having our company the first one to be filled to the minimum number required, and were designated "Company A," while our officers were duly commissioned before any other company officers of the regiment, and hence were the senior line officers.

The quarters of the camp were of the rudest description,—floorless sheds having three tiers of bunks which were expected to accommodate two or three persons in each bunk. But our hearts were very young and fresh then. Probably three fourths of the regiment were from farming communities, and in accordance with the customs of the time they were accustomed to sleep in unwarmed apartments the winter through. But more than all it was the exaltation of the time and

events which made us look upon this and other trivial hardships of camp life (which were no real hardships in fact) as a sort of military picnic.

As several hundred men were already assembled in the camp there was some attempt at military routine, the most noteworthy at that time being what was termed—by courtesy perhaps—the “Dress Parade.” This was attempted at the close of each day on a level field at the foot of the hill, and at the proper moment in the ceremony an old cannon on the hill boomed a loud report. This was called the “sunset gun,” and upon the instant the flag, which had been waving all day on the flagstaff, suddenly slackened its halyards and came down, “upon the run.”

Day after day this performance was watched most critically by a crowd of interested spectators, and it was tacitly understood that our ability to bring the war to a successful issue depended mainly upon the success the color-sergeant had in making the flag run down at the exact moment the cannon was fired. Our ideas of what constituted military efficiency were very crude, and so were the drills and dress parades, but as I now think of it I wonder we did so well.

Yet it was no doubt partly accounted for by the fact that the War Department had loaned us an officer of the regular army, one Captain Smith, as military instructor of the officers in the details of camp and the rudiments of military organization.

There was, as I have intimated, a great deal of patriotic feeling at that time, and of the most undeniable genuineness too. Besides great numbers of the sons of well-to-do families, there were some who left positions yielding good salaries and enlisted as privates, the pay being thirteen dollars per month. But it was a sort of a fad with us then, and in fact all through the war, never to mention this motive in camp save in jest. Whoever arrogated the highest and purest motives, and announced that he enlisted because he loved his country, was sure to become a target for the shafts of ridicule. Even a year or two later, when of a midnight we would be making some forced march in the rain, nothing would bring such a burst of cheerfulness as when a luckless private, happening to fall in a slough and not forgetting the sublime American genius for humor, would shout, "Hurrah for the Union." Yet the sentiment we all ridiculed was genuine

and strong, and continued so throughout the war.

For the present we were rollicking in the novelty of our new life. We were called in the morning by a drum concert, and other tunes by the same orchestra summoned us to our meals and to our duties of various kinds, not forgetting the "sick call" for those who had eaten too much watermelon. The war, though within a day's journey, still seemed in the distance, and the probability that we should soon be engaged in its conflicts and hardships, while fully known, seemed hardly to be realized. Just how it was that the mirage of enthusiasm in which we lived and moved managed to make the future look so bright, when in all reason we had nothing to look forward to but hardship and danger for all, and death for many, is something I do not yet fully understand.

It must be remembered that the summer just passed had been a most disheartening one for our cause, at least as far as the Army of the Potomac was concerned, and that was the army on which all in the East seemed to keep their eyes fixed. The summer's campaign had ended by the Confederate invasion of Maryland and the battle of Antietam, in

which more lives were lost in one day than in one day of any other battle of the war. Its result might have been a great victory for us, but it was not.

It was fought, September 17, 1862, between McClellan, commanding the Army of the Potomac, and General Lee of the Confederate forces, who, as I have said, had invaded Maryland. Accounts of the losses are much at variance, but the best authorities estimate that nearly or quite twenty-four thousand men were killed or wounded in the two armies between sunrise and four o'clock in the afternoon on that fatal day. At its close the Confederates still held a part of their position. On the following morning Lee sent a remarkable request to McClellan; he requested that he might have "a day in which to bury his dead," which was granted, and then he employed the time so obtained to escape safely with his army across the Potomac, leaving his dead unburied. McClellan had sixteen thousand fresh troops which had not been brought into action, and to grant such a request when victory was within his grasp cannot be explained in any way which is creditable to him.

I can but think now that the tremendous

enthusiasm which waxed and grew in the North under these most discouraging circumstances was the most hopeful sign of a race that would not be disheartened, but rose to the occasion with a spirit that meant far more than the actors themselves understood.

Our camp in Poughkeepsie was the star attraction of the year and drew immense crowds, for every recruit's friends and his friends' friends came once, and some of them many times to visit us. But the monotonous "Right dress" and "Front face" had hardly become an old story before it was rumored in camp that we should start soon. Meantime a band had been formed by detailing from the ranks such as had played in some band at home, and I was included in the detail. In its first assembling that band was something of a medley in its composition, and its music at first was far from being perfectly harmonious. Still, our music was as good for music as the regiment's drill was for drill, and as time passed the spirit of organization which dominates everything in military life perfected both the regiment and its band for the respective parts they were to act.

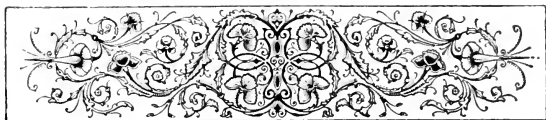
October 11, 1862, there was the final cere-

mony by which we were mustered into the United States service, and we jovially called ourselves "Uncle Sam's boys." Then we bade the camp good-by and marched down to the Main Street landing, where the boat was in waiting.

It was a time of tense feeling, never witnessed by those regiments whose members were from widely separated localities. As we passed through the streets they were thronged to our elbows, and I doubt not every one of all the crowds had one or more friends in the ranks. The excitement was manifested in diverse ways. Some shouted and hurrahed, while others gave way to tears, and through this ecstasy of farewell we marched aboard the steamboat, which soon swung into the river and headed for New York.

Thus began an experience which for some lasted a few months, and for others to the close of the war.





CHAPTER II

FROM CAMP TO FIELD

A Winter in Baltimore—City Camp and Field Camp—
Short Rations—Fun and Hardship—A Forced
March—Echoes of Battle.

IN the southern part of the city of Baltimore was an old estate which had formerly belonged to the Stuart family. On this property was located an army hospital known as "Stuart Hospital." But my principal interest in the locality was in an adjoining camp known as "Camp Millington," for this was our first halt after leaving Camp Dutchess. Just at the time of our arrival one of the family, Gen. J. E. B. Stuart of the Confederate cavalry, commonly mentioned by his nickname, "Jeb" Stuart, was engaged in a raid across Maryland into Pennsylvania, and the camp was tenanted only by empty tents and the guards walking their

beats, for the regiments which had been there had gone to assist in repelling the invasion. They soon returned, however, hungry and tired, and resumed camp routine. Before long these first tenants of Camp Millington were placed on board transports and taken to New Orleans. In time we also were moved to another camp, Camp Belger, and as cold weather came on we were furnished lumber and the regiment built barracks for winter quarters.

These were built in a grove of beautiful oaks near Druid Hill Park, and were in the form of one long two-story building which occupied three sides of a hollow square. This square thus enclosed had the trees suitably thinned out and the stumps cleared away, and then became our parade ground. The central part of the barracks formed the officers' quarters, and several of them sent for their families and instituted housekeeping with a degree of comfort. The wings were fitted into quarters for the enlisted men, each company having a section to itself, the upper story having three tiers of bunks, while on the first floor was a kitchen and mess hall, the latter being provided with tables and benches. At this permanent camp our

cooking was done by company cooks, but never in the field, for there each one cooked for himself.

At one end of the long building which constituted the barracks was the guard-house, where offenders against discipline were confined for longer or shorter terms for minor offences. At the other end was the band quarters, and as no cook was assigned to us we joined in hiring a man, an escaped slave. Besides the moderate wages paid him we did a sort of missionary work by teaching him to read and write. He made really rapid progress, which may have been accounted for, partly at least, by the fact that there were sixteen teachers to one pupil.

Some Northern people who visited the camp during the winter gave him an opportunity to go North and hire out for good wages, but not a step would he move in that direction. He had a wife within the Confederate lines and he was waiting—waiting—in hopes.

Besides the long building of which I have spoken there were several smaller ones to accommodate the quartermaster's stores and the sutler.

Now surely our lines had fallen in pleasant

places, for we were well provisioned and comfortably housed in a large city abounding in amusements. Great attention was given to drill, and with the command "Order arms" a thousand muskets would smite the ground with a single thud. Yet curiously enough, while it was known that the one desideratum in battle was to hit the enemy, very little attention was given to target practice. The art of war was still new to our officers, and it was the show drill that was most highly prized; but we were to graduate from a dearer school.

As the winter wore away the regiment was assigned to guard duty in various parts of the city, and it began to look as if we might be kept there during our whole term, until Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania in the following summer put an end to all such speculation, and one sultry day in June we hurriedly packed the few things we could carry into our knapsacks, and bidding the pleasant camp good-by, began the life of real soldiers.

Sudden and strange was the transition from camp to field. The knapsacks, haversacks and canteens, to which we were so unaccustomed, galled and tired us exceedingly, and when we went into our first camp at

nightfall we lay down and drew the little tents over us, too tired to try to learn how to pitch them. We were on a side-hill so steep that it gave me a sensation of being dragged down by the heels, and as I dropped off to sleep I seemed to be falling off a precipice. In the night I was awakened by a pouring rain which beat in my face, but I pulled my cap over it and again dropped asleep. In the morning I abandoned my blanket and tent, for they, like my clothing, were soaked with water and seemed too heavy to carry; but I replaced them later with similar articles which I picked up on the battlefield of Gettysburg. We were each given a loaf of bread for the day's ration, and then resumed the march.

In these later wars we read of "company cooks," and "details for providing wood and water," but these are all luxurious inventions of a luxurious age. As far as we were concerned, from the beginning to the end of our campaigns we never had "cooks," but every one cooked for himself when there was anything to be cooked; and not only that, but we also had to find fuel and water, each for himself, and it was sometimes necessary to finish a hard day by going a mile or more

after these indispensable articles. Even utensils for cooking we had to find as best we could, for the government only furnished a tin plate and cup with a knife and fork to each. It was common for us to piece out our supply of kitchen furniture by using tin cans which, with their contents, had cost at the sutler's a thirteenth of a month's wages each.

The sutler's store was an institution provided for in the organization of the army, though I think the sutler was not regularly enlisted in the service. He kept a sort of department store which accompanied the regiment most of the time, both at camp and in the field. In our city camp, where everything was easily obtained at regular stores, he was permitted to keep lager beer, and it formed the bulk of his trade. By some curious reasoning this was supposed to have an influence towards temperance, and perhaps it did, for if the boys went to the saloons or worse places to have a convivial time they were likely to encounter still more adverse influences.

But in the field drink could not be included in the sutler's stock of goods, which was carried in a large canvas-topped wagon that was permitted a place in the line of army wagons.

It was then that his prices became exorbitant; but on the whole the sutler must be accounted a blessing. Who cares if condensed milk was a dollar a can and pickles a dollar a bottle? The goods were better to us than the dollars were—when we had them. The sutler's trade was usually active for about a week after we had received two or three months' pay, and after that it dropped nearly to zero.

It was customary for the men to combine in groups of two or three, according to their affinities, and thus secure a little of the benefits of division of labor in the domestic arrangements of the field. Each man carried a piece of tent about five feet square, and when two of these were buttoned together, the middle drawn over a ridge-pole three feet from the ground, and the ends pinned to the ground, it covered a space about five feet by seven. This slight shelter was known technically as a "shelter tent," but was usually spoken of as a "pup tent." It secured neither warmth nor privacy, but it was a long way better than nothing to sleep under when it rained, and the sticks and pins did not have to be carried; they could be provided as needed.

I give these details to show how sudden the change was from camp to field, but it must not be supposed that our spirits were utterly downcast by these physical discomforts. Buoyant youth carries an elixir as exhaustless as the widow's cruse and more potent than the doctor's pellets; the gift of humor, which never failed of finding an outlet. I recall a trivial incident of the second day after leaving Baltimore which will illustrate the point.

A farmer had seated himself on the fence to see us pass. Possibly some one in the First Maryland had recognized him and called him by name, "Hello, Bill!" That was enough: every mother's son when passing him shouted, "Hello, Bill!" like a battle-cry, and long before the brigade had all passed his face had become petrified in a mingled expression that would have made the fortune of a sculptor who could have successfully reproduced it. Such little incidents, having the least trace of fun or humor in them, are immensely relished by tired men on the march and have a positively refreshing effect.

This brigade, now on its way to join the Army of the Potomac, was under command of Brigadier General Lockwood, of the

regular army. He usually rode at the head of the column with his staff and orderlies, and accompanying them was always a mounted man carrying a small flag of peculiar shape and design. This was the "headquarters flag," and wherever that flag was, was the headquarters of the brigade.

Now, it happened on one of these sultry days that we halted for dinner at a broad meadow, in one corner of which was a great spreading oak which, with its comfortable shade, offered an inviting resting-place. What wonder was it that a considerable number of men, and at least one of our officers, as soon as the order to break ranks was given, bent their steps in that direction? To be sure the man with the little flag was standing there, but what of that? Soon the General came riding up on a canter, and seemed to be somewhat excited. He had one peculiarity, and that was that when excited he stammered furiously.

He now began: "T-t-t-this 's mum-mum-my head-head-*quarters* and when I want you I 'll se-se-sen-sen-*send* for you. I-I-I-" but no one waited to hear the remainder of the address, and I doubt whether it was ever completed.

We had now learned that persons not having business at headquarters are not expected to go there unless they are sent for; for although we were drilled and instructed in the duties of soldiers, there was yet to be learned what may be termed the customs and etiquette of field service. It was a long time before those men ceased to be twitted on their reception at headquarters, and the echoes of General Lockwood's stuttering outbreak served to dispel the gloom of many weary hours. But we were comforted a few days afterward by noticing that he was never excited and never stammered when under fire.

On the afternoon of the third day after leaving Baltimore our brigade, which was composed, besides our own regiment, of two from Maryland, came out on the brow of a hill a few miles from Frederick City. Before us lay a beautiful valley in which the roads, for miles as far as the vision extended, were filled with soldiers, horses, canvas-topped wagons, and artillery, all moving towards the north. We were told that this was the Army of the Potomac, and we were surprised at its magnitude, but our surprise was proportionately increased when we learned that

this was the third day it had been passing in this way.

Night closed in, and with the fading of the daylight it was easy to imagine we were looking out on a great city, for the pleasant pastoral landscape was changed to a fairy-land. Lights glimmered among the trees and were scattered by thousands over the hill-sides, while the evening air pulsed with the strains of music and throbbed with drum-beats as we sank to sleep. But with the coming of dawn the city of a night had folded its walls and the roads were thronged again. Night came and as before the city of lights was spread before us. Another morning came and still the roads were thronged with this immense army, and before noon our brigade of 2400 men had marched down the hill, crossed the river and become merged in the great mass.

Then followed days of extreme fatigue, made worse by short rations, as we tried to keep the marching pace of those veterans. On the second of July we were called at day-break, and with hardly time to devour the very scanty breakfast of hardtack and coffee, were ordered to fall in. And now we were directed to drop knapsacks, tents and blankets, or rather such of these articles as were

still retained, for many of them had already been abandoned, and the men were to retain only canteens and haversacks besides the arms and ammunition.

We filed along past headquarters, each one in turn throwing upon the pile such treasures as he had still retained. We were told that the things would be forwarded to us by the wagons, but war-time is careless of its promises, for we never saw them again.

At 4 A.M. we started at a furious marching pace, covering eight miles in two hours. Surely there must be some reason for all this haste, and it was not long before the cause became apparent, for when we were being hurried forward with all speed an unwelcome rumor spread along the column that a great battle had been fought the day before near a village called "Gettysburg"; that our army had been repulsed there and General Reynolds killed.

The rumor proved to be true, except that it was only the beginning of a great battle that had been fought, and even as the rumor reached us it was apparently confirmed by the rolling echoes of distant cannonading.



CHAPTER III

GETTYSBURG

Approaching the Conflict—Meeting the Wounded—
On the Field—Entering the Battle—"How Does
a Battle Look?"—Work of the Stretcher-Bearers
—Opening of the Third Day's Battle—Recover-
ing a Position—Holding Culp's Hill against
"Stonewall" Jackson's Veterans.

AS we neared the field we began to meet stragglers from the front. I well remember the first wounded man that passed us. His hand and arm were covered with blood, and his face and manner denoted extreme fatigue and suffering. We looked from one to another with serious faces which expressed what we all felt but no one put in words. We now realized we were approaching the horrors of a real battle. Jestings ceased; a strange silence fell upon the marching column and we trudged on, less in fear of personal danger, I verily believe, than of

seeing more suffering. Strange that a little wound in a man's arm should affect us so. In twenty-four hours we were as little moved by the sight of wounds and death as the oldest veterans.

When at last we arrived on the field we were held in reserve until nearly night. The frequent booming of cannon west of us told its own story, and an occasional shell which missed Cemetery Ridge would come howling towards us and bury itself in the ground or burst in mid-air. But in the afternoon there arose, away off in the southwest, a great rattle and roar of rifles, mingled with the increasingly frequent booming of cannon. This was the struggle near the "Peach Orchard," "Wheat Field," and "Round-tops." A cloud of sulphurous smoke hung above the trees in that direction, and borne to us on the sultry smoke-laden air there was a significant, and to us a new and peculiar sound; a prolonged, fierce, wavering yell, gaining in strength and rising higher and higher until it finally died away in a scream.

"What's that?" I enquired of a veteran.

"Oh, that's the 'Rebel yell,'" he answered; "they're charging now; listen." We listened and the sound of musketry broke out

thicker and louder: the roar of artillery increased, but after a little there came to us another sound; three long cheers in ringing chest tones.

"That's our boys," said my veteran friend; "the 'Rebs' failed that time."

Often while the afternoon wore away was this experience repeated, and as often were the yells and cheers of the contending forces borne to our listening ears as the tide of battle swayed back and forth. But there came a time, just at night, when the enemy's yell was no longer answered by the Union cheers. It was evident that our line was being driven back. Suddenly our brigade was ordered to march in great haste to the scene of action, we musicians having been detailed as stretcher-bearers. We started on the "double quick," and orders kept coming along the line to "Forward,"—"Faster,"—"Faster!" until we were in the very battle itself.

"How does a battle look?" I imagine some young reader is asking. I recall a road and fields with fences torn down and scattered; trees cut and marred by bullets and shells, broken branches hanging down; wounded men walking and limping towards the rear,

some sitting or lying on the ground; dead men here and there; straggling members of defeated and scattered regiments wandering to the rear; a broken gun-carriage. There was a battery where the smoke-begrimed men were loading and firing across an open field, with the automatic movement which makes each man appear to be but a part of the whole machine, and yet with such a furious haste that made them all seem as if they were on springs worked by quick-moving levers.

A mounted officer was riding past on a gallop when one of the enemy's shells burst directly in front of him. His horse, suddenly rearing, half turned, but hard spurred dashed through the smoke and passed on. There was the incessant roar of rifles, the crashing sound of cannon accompanied by the peculiar howling roar of shells, and the constant *th, th*, of bullets.

Finally there came a halt and rapid forming of line of battle. In the field before us, just skirting the woods, was a long line of men in gray, firing continuously. Our own line paused a little in forming, then a cloud of blue smoke, pierced with a thousand jets of flame, sprang from their front, and before

the echoes of the volley had died away they dashed forward with a cheer. The enemy, almost as much exhausted as the troops whom they were driving, gave way completely and ran scattering through the woods before this impetuous charge of fresh men.

Then followed the stretcher-bearers, taking up the wounded and carrying them back to the ambulances which conveyed them to the field hospitals. Night dropped her sable mantle over the scene, but still we worked on far into the night, guided in our search by cries of pain and calls for help, until at last, compelled by pitchy darkness, we paused in our labor. We were now unable to find our regiment, and, indeed, had lost our sense of locality and points of the compass entirely, and fearing we might walk unwittingly into the enemy's lines, lay down on the blood-stained stretchers and fell asleep; but our sleep was brief.

We were awakened at 3 A.M. by a roaring sound which ended with an explosion and was followed by a scream. From what I have since read I believe that it was the first shell from the opening gun of the third day's battle which had passed over us. It may have passed ten feet above us, but I some-

how got the impression at the time that it was not more than ten inches away. Others followed in quick succession and the day was begun, even at that early hour. We fortunately soon succeeded in finding the regiment, which had been withdrawn from that hill in the night, while we were so busy with the wounded, and had been taken back to the right of the line.

During the forenoon there was considerable fighting along the whole line, of which the infantry occupied about three miles, and the cavalry extended it about a mile on each flank, making the whole line of battle some five miles in length. The peculiar semicircular form, or "fish-hook shape," as it was called, of our infantry line, gave the effect of our being apparently surrounded by fighting; there was firing in all directions.

Then there was the ghastly procession of wounded men straggling from the front: men with blood streaming down their faces and necks; men using muskets for crutches, and some with shattered arms from which blood was dripping. Barns, houses and shaded yards contained long rows of the wounded, waiting for the surgeon's attentions. Some were unconscious, some already

dead, and many bearing their pain in silence with a fortitude greater than was needed to face danger.

Our regiment was moved from place to place, at one time supporting a battery, and at another time fronting a threatened point. The 27th Indiana were in our front here. They had tried to recover a certain point which the enemy had captured on the evening before, and had failed, losing in ten minutes a third of their number.

"Do you think you could do any better?" the General asks Colonel Ketcham, who is in command of our regiment.

"I don't know, but we'll try if you give the word," was the quiet reply.

"I'll see what can be done," said the General as he rode away, and soon after that we saw the enemy's difficult point torn and ploughed and shattered under the concentrated fire of the batteries, and when the infantry again advanced they yielded and fell back.

Early in the forenoon of July 3d, our brigade was put in at Culp's Hill, taking the place of troops which had held the line all night. Now, for the first time, our brigade and regimental surgeons established themselves, locating their field hospital at the old

stone barn on the Baltimore pike, and I was assigned to their direction and began my first experience in field hospitals.

The word hospital brings to the mind of the unmilitary reader thoughts of a long room, with cots having white sheets. But a field hospital is simply a place, generally out-of-doors, where the brigade or division surgeons have placed themselves to receive the wounded as they are brought from the front, and give them such immediate attention as is possible. Often these operations and dressings are the last they receive for several days.

On the previous day we did not see the field hospitals at all, but delivered the wounded to the ambulances. But ours now established was so near the battle line and so much under fire that no attempt was made to bring the ambulances up. There was room on the barn floor for some of the worst cases after their operations, but the others were simply laid on the grass. It was in charge of Dr. Campbell, the Surgeon of our regiment, and there were several other surgeons present as his assistants. He was a man well past middle life, and many wondered that he should undertake the hardships incident to war. I have often thought that he may have been

prompted to the step as much by his love for the boys of his dear home county as he was by love of his country, for a kinder hearted man never lived.

He set up his operating-table, which was a portable affair, in the open field, and here we brought the most severely wounded, one at a time, and when we removed them some were minus a limb or arm which it had been found necessary to amputate. The cases not needing elaborate operations were attended to where they were lying, by other surgeons. But the dear man handled every patient in a fatherly way, as if he were a relative and he had a special and personal interest in his case. Surely he had his reward, for to his dying day, which was long after the war, he had the devoted affection of every member of the regiment.

After I had worked in this field hospital for some time, Dr. Campbell remarked, "I think, Charlie, you'd better go to the regiment now and assist some of the wounded to get back."

"Where is it, Doctor?"

"Down in those woods," was the careless reply.

Phrased though it was in the good doctor's kind way, the order was not a welcome one.

"Those woods" were not far distant, and wandering missiles from there frequently whizzed past us. Above their tree tops hung a cloud of smoke, while from their depths came the roar of rifles, rising and falling in tumult as the waves of onset rolled against our line, or, broken and repulsed, rolled back to gather force for the ever-recurring attack. But I had absorbed already so much of the army spirit that I would not even seem to hesitate, and turned my feet at once in that direction.

I had no difficulty in finding the regiment, who were in the line of battle on the southern slope of Culp's Hill, crouched behind a barricade of logs and branches, and once in the line I was rather surprised to find that the fear which had haunted me so on the way immediately vanished. Yet in each subsequent trip to the regiment, as I came under fire I experienced the same shrinking dread of the bullets, which all seemed intended for me. Their whispering message gives one the singular feeling of being soul-naked in their presence, and that neither clothing nor body would for an instant check their flight.

Yet curiously, whether from the presence of numbers or whatever the cause, each time as soon as I reached the regiment this feeling

vanished and I felt as much at ease as when at the rear. The experience was quite different from that of the night before, for then the exertion of running while I was burdened with the heavy stretcher, in the effort to keep up with the column, gave no room for thought of danger.

The ground descended sharply in our front here and the enemy's line was not more than fifteen or twenty rods distant. The smoke had settled so thickly in the heavy timber that we could not distinguish them clearly, and the spurts of smoke from their guns furnished the principal indication which showed our men where to aim.

There is courage and courage, but this was of a different character from that of the day before, when in the excitement and impetus of the charge they had scattered twice their number of the enemy, by the very "freshness," as one phrased it, of the attack. But here we were confronted by "Stonewall" Jackson's famous veterans, who had never known defeat. They had gained a little ground on the evening before and had lost it again in the morning, and now were struggling with an obstinate persistence known to no other race, to recover it. The combat

was long past the excitement stage. It had now settled to a resolute test of endurance; a grim determination to fight to a finish; a primordial test of blood and nerve; a trying of which could longest bear being killed. It was a death grapple. Would "Stonewall's" invincibles succeed, as they had always succeeded, or would it be their first defeat?

I was struck by the cool and matter-of-fact way in which our men were loading and firing, while the dead lay at frequent intervals, and not infrequently some of our number fell. And yet it was but yesterday the same men had paled at the sight of a wounded man. What magic art had suddenly transformed these timid youths into hardened veterans?

Nor was the change less noticeable in the field hospitals. Men and boys who but a short time before could hardly bear to look at any serious injury now carried wounded men to the surgeon's table, removed the amputated limbs which gradually accumulated in a pile near by, and took part in all the sickening details of hospital service; and through it all with a cool and easy way as if it was a round of duties they had been accustomed to for years.

There was an incident in this struggle at Culp's Hill which illustrates its desperate character. At one time a little white cloth was seen in front of our regiment. The firing slackened at that part of the line to see what a white flag meant at such a time, though rifles were held at the shoulder, ready for any attempted surprise. Presently a straggling line of Confederates came running up the hill, and, springing over the breastworks, gave themselves up as prisoners. There were about two hundred of them.

When questioned as to why they had done so they explained that a second line back of theirs prevented any possibility of retreat, and that the fire of our line had become so destructive that they had determined to become prisoners in this way to escape destruction. It had required some planning and some daring, for they were obliged to wait for a favorable moment when the thickness of the smoke concealed them from those in the rear, as well as from those at each side. When the favorable moment arrived they sprang forward and made their escape into our line, and they seemed greatly relieved when they had accomplished it successfully.



CHAPTER IV

THE CRISIS BATTLE OF THE WAR

Pickett's Grand Charge—Daring Courage of the South
Breaks against the Firmness of the North—What
might have Happened—Hope of Republics.

A LITTLE before noon on that fateful day there was a gradual lessening of the firing. The artillery ceased entirely, and the rifles, though not completely stopped, subsided into a rattling skirmish fire. Our regiment was withdrawn from the line on Culp's Hill in order to cool their guns, being replaced by other troops, and were now resting in the edge of the woods. An hour passed: what could it mean?

"Something 's on foot, you may depend," said a veteran; "the battle 's not ended yet."

Scarce a breath of breeze swayed the air, while the sun passed the meridian and another hour wore away.

Suddenly there came from beyond Cemetery Ridge on the west the heavy sound of two cannon fired in quick succession. They were Lee's signal guns, and before their echoes had died away the air was quaking and trembling with the sound of one hundred and fifty cannon fired as fast as the men could work them, and all the variety of projectiles then known to warfare were screaming, hissing, and roaring towards our devoted line. But the noise and roar, great as it was, was soon doubled by the reply of our own artillery, nearly equal in number of guns. For more than an hour we listened to the most rapid and heavy cannonading of the whole war.

The explosions followed in such rapid succession that they became a continuous roar. It was more than deafening; the air seemed to lose, under this beating and torture, its ordinary capabilities of conveying sound, and to become stagnant and paralyzed. The events occurring about us became a grand pantomime which our eyes could see indeed, but in which the sense of hearing took no part. An ammunition wagon rumbled heavily along the stone pike and a mounted courier galloped past, the iron of his horse's hoofs

striking fire on the pavement, but to us they were silent passers; the clash of iron and stone gave no sound that reached the ears: our brains were filled with a roar which we seemed to feel rather than hear.

A comrade has since said that he was within twenty-five yards of a battery a part of that time, and did not know when it was fired unless he was looking in that direction. And yet there was some peculiar quality in this sound carnival, not easily understood. It was possible, for instance, for persons standing very near together to converse, almost in the ordinary tones of voice. Yet at the same time the air was absolutely impenetrable by the voice to any distance.

Another singular thing is that heavy cannonading has a tendency to produce sleepiness in some persons. As I have said, our regiment was resting at this time, and as I was at the right of the regimental line I happened to sit next to a member of another regiment, one which had been in several campaigns, including that most severe one of all, the Peninsular campaign. He had been giving me an interesting account of his experiences when the heavy cannonading began, but that suddenly ended his narrative, for he

casually remarked, "That always makes me sleepy. Wake me up if my regiment starts, will you?" and despite the fact that shells were dropping and exploding here and there in our immediate vicinity, or ripping through the trees above us, he was soon sleeping soundly on the grass.

At last, after an hour or more of this heavy cannonading, it began to decrease, and in its place there came the sound of more rifle firing. Then we knew that another charge was being made on our line, and when the cannonading had almost ceased there came to us again the sound which had grown familiar the day before: that long, fierce, screaming yell, the battle-cry of the Southern army, nearer than it was yesterday and louder it seemed. The cannonading ceased now and the roar of small arms increased, and finally lessened and died away, and when the artillery again broke forth it was accompanied by cheer after cheer, and we knew that the charge was repulsed. It was not until long afterward that we learned the full particulars of this charge of Pickett's Division, which has passed into history as the turning-point of the battle, and, in fact, of the whole war.

At this time of the invasion of the North by the Confederate army the war had been in progress some two years, and during that time the South had met with more successes on the whole than reverses. They had succeeded in a measure in defending their territory in the East from our army. What they needed most at that time was financial aid and foreign recognition. If they could invade the North and defeat the Northern army on its own soil, it would obtain for them both. This was what Lee attempted at the battle of Gettysburg. If it had succeeded the Confederacy would probably soon have been recognized by every nation in Europe, and financial aid would have been proffered in abundance. If he failed—well, he did fail.

Looking back from this date it seems a wonder that we succeeded. The Southern army was combined under an able leadership, with more experienced officers having West Point educations than our army contained, and under a supreme commander of known ability in whom they had the most enthusiastic confidence. On the other hand our army was frequently thwarted by a change of commanders and hampered and harassed by a meddlesome War Department. This,

with the further fact that its ardor was dampened by lack of substantial success, while the higher officials seemed many times to be more influenced by political considerations, or personal spite and jealousy, than by real desire for the success of the government, was a heavy handicap.

It seemed as if the hope of the Republic must be, as the hope of republics must always be, in the people themselves. And when the battle was finally won it was won more by the quality of the citizen soldiers than through any talent of generalship.

On this last day of the battle, when Lee found that all his efforts of the morning to force any part of our line had failed, he concluded to make one final desperate charge on the very centre of our army, and if possible to break into and crush it, leaving the North with its cities and wealth defenceless against his farther progress. The prelude to this charge was the cannonading I have described.

Then from out of the woods west of Cemetery Ridge were marshalled the forces for the charge, in line of battle, line back of line, all fresh men that had not taken part in the conflict; the very flower and pick of the Southern army. What supreme devotion to

a commander's orders! What sublime courage! They must march through open fields up a rising ground for nearly a mile before they could begin to fight; and during the whole distance they must be exposed to the fire of over one hundred pieces of artillery, and of rifles too, as soon as they were within range.

The story of this magnificent charge has been often told: how they advanced in spite of the fearful carnage in their ranks, until their front line finally plunged, with the fierce yell we had heard so plainly, upon our line. That was the supreme hour of the Confederacy; that yell marked the acme of its power. It was Slavery's demand to the world, and if it succeeded it seemed as if the world must bow down to Slavery.

Lee had counted with a just confidence on the dashing courage of his men, but there was a staying quality in the Northern army that he had not estimated at its full value. And so when his front line actually broke into our front ranks, as he could plainly see with his field-glass from the tower of the old seminary, from which point he watched the action, he expected to see our soldiers flee like sheep in all directions. Instead of which, to his

dismay, he saw them close in upon three sides of his invading force at short range, even finally using bayonets, clubbed muskets, and swords. This struggle at close quarters is thought to have lasted about ten minutes.

Of the whole number who joined in that attack many were killed and wounded on the way, while others broke and ran before reaching our lines; but of those who actually came to close quarters with our force none returned. Some were taken prisoners, the rest were slain, and where they fell and are buried there was buried race slavery in America; for this was the turning point of the war, and from this time on the course of the Confederacy was a downward course until the cause of slavery was "the lost cause."

Thus ended the charge and thus ended the most important battle of the century.





CHAPTER V

AFTER THE BATTLE

Emotions in Battle—Quality of Courage—Gettysburg the Greatest Battle, both in Importance and in Loss of Life—Greatest Regimental Losses Known to History.

ONE of our younger writers made himself a name and notoriety, at least, by a single book, and that a small one. It purports to relate the experience of a private soldier during a two days' battle, and a very large proportion of that experience is the boy's own highly wrought emotions under new and trying conditions. The book received favorable notice, both in this country and abroad; and, most singular of all, some of those asserting its truthfulness to real life are men who have been through their dozen or more of battles and may be presumed to know something whereof they speak.

Yet after the book had received this high commendation it chanced that its author became attached to the volunteer army in the late Spanish-American war. It was said that, to his own astonishment and mortification, he found the reality did not much resemble the pen pictures of his imagination.

My own position as a non-combatant in the army gave me exceptional opportunities for observation not enjoyed by either officers or privates in the line, or by those whose duty it was to remain always at the rear. Except for this I should hesitate to criticise the all but unanimously favorable judgment passed upon this product of the imagination,—for the writer admitted to never having had experience of war at that time, and the book, with all its vivid recount of emotions experienced, was evolved entirely from his own consciousness.

In spite of what writers have imagined and historians have recorded, in spite of what veterans think their emotions were because it seems to be considered that such emotions would have been suitable to the occasion, I do not hesitate to differ from them all. Upon first entering an engagement and during special crises, there are doubtless a few mo-

ments of much excitement, but this quickly disappears and in the strain of a hard and persistent battle highly wrought emotions are the exception and not the rule. Instead of excitement, the great underlying motive of action at such times is a deep and strong sense of duty, greatly reinforced and strengthened by military discipline and resting upon stability of character as its basis.

For my own part, I confess to a feeling of disappointment in my first and each succeeding experience of battle scenes. Not that the occurrences were less dreadful than I had expected, for they even exceeded my anticipations. The effect upon myself was not to increase the height of feeling in proportion, however, but rather the reverse, the consciousness seeming to instinctively accept the prevailing conditions and adjust itself to those conditions.

I had seen a crushed finger and an injured arm, and had even witnessed a death, and had often wondered how it would seem to have the emotions experienced on those occasions multiplied a thousandfold; wondered what my sensations would be were I to witness a thousand persons with bruised and broken members, or dead and dying. Yet when I

did witness such scenes I discovered—though I did not formulate it then—that it is the unusual, the exceptional, which impresses our feelings. As numbers multiply the emotions are dissipated until by the very magnitude of the calamity the mind unconsciously accepts the occurrences as the natural order of events and devotes itself to whatever work it may have at hand, as to any ordinary occupation.

Thus when we met the first wounded man my emotions reached their highest pitch, and I saw the faces of those about me blanch with fear, dread, and pity. Yet within twenty-four hours I saw a man's limbs torn from his body by a cannon shot and men killed in numbers, and I assisted at the amputation table for hours, without any of those emotions of dread and horror that we are apt to consider as inseparable from such scenes.

In regard also to the question of physical courage, so necessary a quality in battle, I often find the crudest opinions expressed. I think it is commonly supposed that men are sharply divided into two classes,—those who are afraid and those who are not; or, as it is more commonly expressed, “The brave ones and the cowards.” Save for a few abnormal

exceptions it would be much more nearly correct to say that all men belong to both classes. When about to take part in an engagement, and during a little while after getting well under fire, there enters an unpleasant and unwelcome thought that one may soon be numbered among the dead, or be one of those whose sufferings were such a common sight. But in this case as in the others the mind instinctively adjusts itself to the prevailing conditions, and, without losing the thought of danger, yet becomes to a degree indifferent to it. The "scare feeling" is soon gone, and thenceforth it is that dominant sense of duty of which I have spoken which holds the reins.

The battle was ended with that great charge, though we did not know it then. An obscure village, the trading centre of an old farming district, which had stood unchanged for a century, had sprung suddenly to a pinnacle of fame, and wherever the greatest battle of the greatest war of a century noted for its great achievements is mentioned, there will be heard the name of Gettysburg. Not only was the battle greatest in its loss of life, but it was greatest also in its issue as the turning-point of the war.

The numbers of the opposing forces were about equal, being variously estimated at from 75,000 to 85,000 on each side. The losses were very large, not only in the aggregate, but also in proportion to the number engaged. Our loss in the number of those who were killed or died of their wounds was 5291; and those who were wounded must have swelled the total to nearly or quite 18,000. It is supposed that the enemy's loss was considerably the larger, owing to the fact that theirs was the attacking force. So it will be seen that the losses of both sides in killed and wounded were more than Washington ever had under his command at any one time during the Revolution. Startling as these casualties of an army may appear, the record of the losses of individual regiments is almost beyond belief.

Just at sundown on July 2d, when our brigade was being hurried to the fray, was a critical point in the nation's life. The enemy had discovered a weak place in our line and were hurrying a whole division in there to seize the point of vantage, and had they succeeded it might have won for them the battle.

It fell to the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry to hold this large force at bay, at all

hazards, until reinforcements should arrive. They not only did this, but met the attack half way by a counter charge in which they captured a stand of the enemy's colors. But what was the price of such valor? In the short five or ten minutes which it took us to reach the place on a run, more than four fifths of their number were killed or wounded. This is the largest percentage of casualties recorded of any regiment in any one battle (save that of one Confederate regiment on the next day), either here or in Europe, and it is worthy of note that at the close of the engagement none were "missing"; all save the dead and wounded answered the roll-call, for not a man had flinched from that deadly crisis.

It was probably the wounded from that now famous regiment that we carried from the field when we worked so late that night, for I do not remember that my own regiment lost any men at that time.

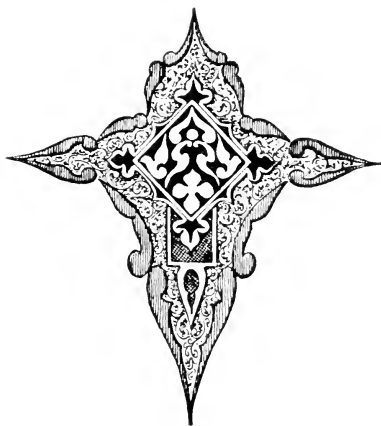
To further illustrate, we may compare this action with some others which have attained to a place in history, and for this purpose I cannot do better than to quote a paragraph from that painstaking statistician, Col. William F. Fox, as follows:

“Take the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava. Its extraordinary loss has been made a familiar feature of heroic verse and story in every land, until the whole world has heard of the gallant Six Hundred and their ride into the valley of Death. Now as the brigade accomplished nothing in this action,—merely executed an order which was a blunder,—it must be that it was the danger and its attendant loss which inspired the interest in that historic ride. What was the loss? The Light Brigade took 637 officers and men into that charge; they lost 113 killed and 134 wounded; total 247, or 36.7 per cent.”

It will be noticed that this is less than half the percentage of loss scored by the Minnesota regiment, and the Light Brigade accomplished nothing at that. At Gettysburg there were twenty different regiments in our army who lost in killed and wounded more than half their number who were present for duty, so it will be seen that this battle was phenomenal in many respects.

The burial of these thousands in hot July weather was necessarily very hastily done, but in the following year a national cemetery was established there, and our dead, as many at least as could then be found, were removed

thither. It was at the dedication of this cemetery that Lincoln, with his rare genius for giving the most beautiful expression to the nation's best thought, delivered that epitome of the principles of representative government which has become the classic of the century.





CHAPTER VI

FROM PENNSYLVANIA TO THE POTOMAC

Aftermath of the Strife—The Price of Valor—Acres of Dead Men—Phenomena of Death in Battle—Repulsive Appearance of the Battlefield—A Forced March—Again Facing the Enemy.

FOR forty-eight hours we had been without food. With the fatigue and loss of sleep, and the pouring rain which began on the night of July 3d and soaked us to the skin, this was not calculated to raise the spirits. But with the coming of morning the news suddenly spread that the enemy had retreated during the night.

Perhaps the reader imagines us now throwing up our caps and shouting in exultation over the victory, but nothing of the kind occurred. Doubtless every one in the whole army was as heartily glad as I was myself; but, for one thing, the physical condition of

the men forbade it. When poor humanity is reduced to that condition in which food and a dry place to lie on seem the only desirable things in life, there is small likelihood that men will burst out in ecstatic demonstration.

And then, too, there was the other fact that not a regiment but had lost valuable members, and scarce a man in our whole army there who had not lost friends and acquaintances. Besides this there was also the constant presence of the wounded. Turn which way we might there was always suffering before us, for even then they had not all received the surgeon's attentions. How could there be great outward demonstrations of rejoicing in such surroundings? The innate delicacy of manhood forbade it.

My regiment remained near there, not far from our field hospital, until nearly night on July 4th, and I secured time in the course of the day to visit a little of the field. My first visit was to that portion which the enemy had occupied near Culp's Hill, confronting our own brigade. "Stonewall" Jackson's old corps was commanded by Ewell at that time, for it was after Jackson's death, and it was they who had faced us here. Again and again they had attempted to force our line

back, as I had witnessed on the previous day, and had been defeated in every attempt, and now we could see what their courage had cost them. One could have walked on dead men over acres of that ground in any direction.

For the most part the dead were lying on their backs with wide-open expressionless eyes. In a few instances the features were drawn and distorted in a manner which gave an expression of great pain and horror. I supposed at the time that the victims had suffered very painful deaths, but after experiences convinced me that the expression of features after death gives no clue whatever to the presence or absence of pain before death takes possession.

I remember one instance in particular in which a man had either walked or crawled to a considerable distance away from the line before he finally lay down beside the fence where he died. His eyes were closed, perhaps by some comrade who thus gave him his last attention. His wounds were such that his must have been a lingering, painful death, and yet there rested on his features such a pleasant and delightfully happy smile as to make one think for the moment that it

was the expression of happy thoughts and dreams not even extinguished by death.

The phenomena of death in battle has received more or less scientific attention, but I doubt whether all its features are yet fully explained. For one thing, it is claimed that under some conditions sudden death leaves the body rigid and motionless in the exact position it was in at the moment of death, and one writer has given an instance of a soldier who was killed while he was in the act of mounting his horse, and remained standing with one foot on the ground and the other in the stirrup until the line came up. Only one instance of this character came under my own observation at Gettysburg.

A man—as it happened, a neighbor and acquaintance of mine, John P. Wing of Company A—was shot in or near the heart while standing. Falling forward on his hands and knees his fingers closed tightly on the leaves and twigs, and it was probably in that attitude that death reached him. Although he rolled slowly to one side and finally turned completely on his back, yet his limbs and arms retained the same relative position, his hands still clasping the leaves and twigs, and it seemed to be one of those instances, oftener

heard of than seen, in which every fibre of the body became suddenly rigid at the instant of death.

I recall another instance which occurred a year later at Resaca, Ga. After that battle there was found among the Confederate dead, which lay so thickly in front of our regiment, one of them who had taken position on his hands and knees behind a tree for shelter. He was probably killed instantly in that position, and when found was rigid in death, still on his hands and knees, and with head turned to one side and wide-open eyes seemed to be still looking for his comrades.

On that part of the field of which I have spoken, among the dead was an officer of rank, said to be one of Ewell's staff officers. His horse also lay there, and the officer's dead hand still clasped the bridle. Afterward several different persons told me of having shot this particular man. The fact was that the smoke of battle settling in the heavy timber here had greatly obscured the lines from each other. This officer was riding along the line when a puff of wind lifted the smoke and brought him into full view for an instant, and in that instant both he and his horse were pierced by many bullets.

But aside from the isolated instances which each had some quality of interest for the observer, there was much in these aftermaths of the strife that was repulsive to the last degree. At one stage of the battle a portion of the enemy's forces a little farther south, in the position which the 27th Indiana had tried to take, suffering so heavily in the attempt, had been furiously shelled by our batteries, and some of the results of this bombardment could now be seen. Their position was such as to make it possible for artillery to work its most fearful havoc,—a large force closely formed in a hollow,—and the partially enflading fire had been very destructive.

Men who have fallen by bullets often show no external mark to the casual observer; they are simply men who were alive but now are dead. But these victims of the shell and canister showed the human form torn and disfigured beyond description. In one case I noticed the hand, now stiffened in death, still clasped against the protruding entrails where the jagged fragment of a shell had torn open the abdominal cavity.

In another instance I remember the whole front of the chest of a large man had been literally torn away, exposing to view its

interior, including the heart and lungs. One had climbed into a tall tree to do the sharpshooter act, and when killed his foot had caught in a crotch and he now hung, head downward, from the limb.

All were bloating and blackening in the July heat, and the air was filled with that indescribably sickening odor never found save on a summer battlefield. Trees cut and mangled in their full leafage; thousands of camp-fires, from which ascended the smoke and steam of wet, burning wood and blood-saturated clothing; the putrefaction of human and animal remains; all combined and blended to assail, lest the sight should not be sufficient, the sense of smell as well. So when we had finally laid at rest our little group of heroes, whose first battle had been their last, it was not an unwelcome order by which we turned our backs on the scene and wearily took up the pursuit of the retreating foe.

In connection with this battle I have often wondered whether the Commanding General knew of some things that every private, at least in our brigade, knew of. For one thing, that heavy cannonading previous to Pickett's grand charge must have exhausted the

enemy's store of artillery ammunition, and our men knew of it and talked of it at the time. Short sections of railroad iron were among the curiosities of projectiles that were hurled among us, and once a large stone struck a tree directly over my head, the pieces dropping to the ground about me. This fact of a shortage of artillery ammunition with the enemy would have had a great bearing upon the results of the movements which Meade might have made at the time of Lee's retreat across the Potomac, but which he failed to make.

It was night when we started and we went but a few miles, reaching the vicinity of Littletown, Penn., and here we halted and made camp. The next day we moved a short distance farther and again halted. Of this camp I have small recollection, for after supper I sank on the ground in a dreamless sleep. It was said that the bugle sounded reveille at 2 A.M. the next morning, but I did not hear it; yet the results of that over-sleep made such an impression upon my subconscious self that never again in my whole term of service, no matter what my previous fatigue, did I fail to promptly awaken in response to the morning call of the bugle.

When I did awaken an hour later it was just in time to hear the imperative command, "Fall in," and, catching together my things as best I could, I made a run for my place in the line. Unfortunately I was thus started, breakfastless, on what is known in the army as a "forced march." For infantry sixteen miles a day was then called a "regular" day's march, but on this occasion we covered thirty miles before noon, reaching the vicinity of Frederick City. Most of the way was over one of the famous Maryland stone pikes, and though nothing could furnish a better road for artillery and wagon trains, yet the sharp stone surface continually indenting the soles of the shoes for so many weary hours, in my own case and in that of many others, caused intense pain in the feet and limbs. One droll fellow described the sensation as "a jumping toothache in both feet."

After leaving Frederick City we passed westward over the South Mountain range, entering the Cumberland Valley. This was the valley in which Lee's army was trying to escape back to Virginia, harassed all the way by the cavalry and threatened at every pass by the infantry. The enemy must have

passed when we reached the valley west of South Mountain, and we followed on with the army in pursuit. In due course of time we came up with the Confederate forces, where they were trying to cross the Potomac in the vicinity of Williamsport.





CHAPTER VII

ON THE POTOMAC

Scenery of Western Maryland—Interviewing a Scout—
Enemy Escaped—Whose the Fault—Night March
in Storm and Darkness—Harper's Ferry.

WESTERN Maryland is divided across from north to south by successive ridges of the Alleghany Mountains, and between these ridges lie valleys of some of the finest farming lands in the East. The Cumberland Valley is one of these, and is in fact, but a northern extension of the Shenandoah Valley, though the two are divided by the Potomac River. I remember it as one of the pleasantest pastoral landscapes that I have ever seen, for it was entirely lacking in the dead uniformity of the western farm scenes. Though there were wide stretching fields rolling away in the distance, yellow with unharvested wheat, there were also wooded lands,

rocky ridges, uplands, roads winding along pleasant streams, cascades and dells, and comfortable homesteads nestling among the shade trees and orchards.

Williamsport is a small town near the narrowest part of Maryland, just where the Potomac River begins its southeastward course which takes it past Harper's Ferry to Washington.

When we arrived there preparations were already being made, by the rapid building of earthworks in well selected positions, for a battle which seemed to be impending. Many of these earthworks had in their front an entangled *chevaux-de-frise* of felled forest, with gaps conveniently arranged where masked batteries could easily enfilade an assaulting force. These carefully prepared lines were said to be some seven miles in length, with their ends resting on the Potomac, and in their semicircular sweep enclosing Lee's army where it was crossing. The enemy on their part, we could plainly see, were building similar defences against assault, while between the armies were the two long skirmish lines continually banging at each other.

Skirmish lines and picket lines do for armies a service not unlike that performed

for the insect tribe by their antennæ: they are thrown out to feel for what cannot be seen. So an army never rests without throwing out a circle of pickets beyond the outskirts, who watch to guard against surprise while the army sleeps.

But when in the immediate presence of the enemy or in actual contact, as was now the case, these out-guards are known as a skirmish line. It sometimes happened that they were placed so near the enemy that they could not reach the spot except in darkness, and then could not be relieved by others until night came again. It was not uncommon in such circumstances for the soldier, as soon as he was placed, to begin the construction of a little fortification of his own. Digging up the earth with his bayonet he would shovel it out with his tin plate or cup, and before daylight came would have a hole large enough to sit or lie down in, and protected by a mound of earth in its front.

The men told me that in this way they sometimes got so near the enemy's pickets as to converse with them, and even under favorable circumstances to strike up a temporary truce in which they would trade coffee for tobacco, perhaps, and "swap lies."

These opposing skirmish lines, which we could see so plainly, were in open fields, and within such easy range of each other that neither side attempted to relieve the men by daylight. It was rumored that the enemy was crossing the river under great difficulties, and that a vigorous attack while they were thus at a disadvantage would insure us a substantial victory. A veteran who had studied the occult signs of war with the same shrewdness with which the Yankee farmer reads the portents of weather in the sky told me he believed Lee's army was retreating, for he never knew their skirmish line to fire so rapidly and incessantly except when their army was in retreat.

I saw and conversed with one of our scouts, a farmer-like appearing man mounted on a plain-looking horse. He was in reality a spy, and had he been caught by the enemy would undoubtedly have been hung. He told me that he had just returned from a trip in which he passed completely through Lee's army, entering on one side and coming out on the other. He said that the rains had swelled the Potomac to such an extent that the Confederates were crossing with great difficulty, the men wading nearly to their

arms in the water and carrying their guns and accoutrements above their heads to keep them from being submerged.

If Lee's army had been attacked while in this partially helpless position of being on both sides of a swollen river, he must surely have suffered a severe defeat. This was well known and commented upon in the ranks, and every one hoped the attack would be made.

It may be thought by some that an unknown person represented himself to me as a "scout," and had entertained himself by relating fairy tales in regard to things which he had not seen, when, if he really had the information alleged he should have reported it to headquarters instead of retailing his gossip to privates and musicians. But he told me that he had already reported fully at Meade's headquarters, and that his duty for the time being was ended.

Subsequent events and all the light which history has shed upon this epoch have convinced me that the statements which he made in our somewhat lengthy conversation were true in every detail.

"Why was not the attack made?" This is a question which has been asked many

times, but those who were responsible for the lack of action never answered it satisfactorily, and most of those who might have done so have long since passed away. The probable reason is that Lee's prestige of success up to the time of that invasion had to a certain extent made Meade, who was new in the command of the army, over-cautious in his ventures. The furnace of war had not yet presented to the nation its trio of real military chieftains. A year later, with either Grant, Sherman, or Sheridan given such an opportunity, Lee's army would have been destroyed and the war ended.

So we sat idly for days in our camps, with our silent artillery within easy range of the enemy's lines, while they safely escaped into Virginia again. Then in darkness and a furious storm we had sudden orders to march, and, hastily furling our things, shouldered the knapsacks and plunged through the night and rain into an invisible landscape. The roads were but swimming beds of mortar from the heavy rainfall and the passage of armies, and when we essayed to cross the fields the rich soil, if not yet as soft, furnished a deeper mud. The furious night tempest now blotted out earth and sky and we

struggled blindly on, each being guided solely by his file leader. How long this struggle with the earth and elements continued I cannot tell, but it must have been for several hours.

By some break in the lines a dozen or more of us finally got separated from the regiment, and were without any clew whatever by which we could find it. At last we discovered a comparatively dry place by a fence and lay down in a row with our heads towards it, hoping to get a little sleep. But we had hardly got settled before we heard the sound of horsemen riding towards us. "Tim" Beach was on the end of the row towards them, and as they came near, fearing that we might be ridden over, he shouted, "Halt!" The horses stopped with suddenness, and then we heard the clicking of pistols being cocked.

"Who comes there?" called a voice from the darkness.

"Friends," answered Tim, for such was the usual reply to that challenge.

"What regiment?" demanded the voice from the darkness.

"150th New York," was the reply.

"All right," came back in gentler tones, and

then we heard the murmur of voices as they approached slowly. We learned that they were couriers, or "orderlies," as they were generally called, bound on military errands to some part of the army, and when first challenged thought they had stumbled in the darkness upon a squad of the enemy.

But the longest night has an end, and this night, which I remember more as a nightmare than as a reality, also saw the day dawn. Faint with fatigue, water soaked and mud soaked, we leaned against the fence, wondering what we should do to find the regiment, when,—“Speak of angels and you hear the rustle of their wings!”—here was the regiment coming down the road. They had halted but a short distance beyond where we stopped and were now, in obedience to orders just received, on their way back to our former position.

With the game escaped there was nothing for us to do but to resume the monotonous daily tramping which, following the general course of the river, brought us in time to the vicinity of Harper's Ferry. We followed the towpath of the canal on the north bank of the river, and, passing beneath the towering peak known as Maryland Heights, went into

camp for a few days in a little side valley known as Pleasant Valley. This gave me an opportunity to visit the renowned place just across the river.

Harper's Ferry is a post village on the southern side of the Potomac and on the western bank of the Shenandoah River, which, flowing northward, here enters the larger stream. The village, with narrow streets and compactly built, is enclosed on a peninsula between the two rivers, immediately below which, with their united force, they break through the great range of the Blue Ridge. This river pass in the mountains presents scenery which has impressed many visitors with its grandeur and beauty and its marvellous majesty. Jefferson declared it to be "one of the most stupendous scenes in nature, and well worth a voyage across the Atlantic to witness." In the alternate occupation of the place by the two opposing armies the bridge from Maryland to Harper's Ferry had been destroyed, but an army pontoon bridge furnished a very good substitute.

We found the most interesting object to be the old engine-house with its iron doors, where John Brown had made his last stand. He had knocked out bricks here and there,

forming embrasures through which with his rifles to defend his little castle. The holes had been filled with new bricks, but the difference in color showed plainly.

As the only definite and organized stand for liberty the African race have ever made in this country the epoch is well worth the historian's careful attention, and the place itself is of more than ordinary interest. The fanatical and visionary character of the scheme may well be overlooked in bringing the homage we all must grant to those whose lofty courage impelled them to confront, singled handed almost, the great and aggressive evil in whose hands the nation then seemed like dough. In the awakening which it gave to the country it is not unlikely that this incident was a more potent final influence than it has been credited with being.





CHAPTER VIII

VIRGINIA

Entering Confederate Territory—Snicker's Gap, with Feasts of Blackberries—Distant View of the Shenandoah Valley—Sickness in Camp—Coincidence—The Gravestone of a Northern Girl Stops the Bullet Aimed at a Northern Soldier.

AT this Pleasant Valley camp there was a readjustment of our organization. Up to this time we had been brigaded with two Maryland "home regiments"; "Not to leave the State except in case of invasion," as Artemas Ward humorously said in reference to his company. As a matter of fact these two regiments were enlisted to serve north of the Potomac only, so they were now to return to their homes.

One of them, the 1st Maryland Home Brigade, was largely recruited in Baltimore, and the 1st Maryland Confederate also contained

many members from the same city. The position of our brigade at Gettysburg in the long conflict at Culp's Hill was such that these two regiments confronted each other, and the members of our 1st Maryland found several acquaintances among the Confederate dead after the battle, one man finding his brother among the slain.

I will not weary my readers with any undue "ponderosity of particularity" in regard to army organization, except to explain that several regiments, usually five or six, constituted a brigade; three or four brigades made a division, and generally three divisions formed an army corps. There was a system of small flags, one carried with each headquarters, which showed at a glance to which organization each headquarters belonged.

In the new adjustment we became permanently incorporated in the Army of the Potomac, an army which soon began its southward march again. It was several days in crossing the river here on the pontoon bridge, and by going a short distance from our camp to the brow of the hill we could see the mingled and changing column winding down the hills, crossing the bridge, and dis-

appearing in the town, only to appear again as they crossed the Shenandoah and again disappear in the mountain beyond.

When we think of armies we are apt to think of them as being mostly composed of men, but some portions of the army were much more conspicuous than the men. At one time we would see a string of the large, white canvas-covered wagons, each drawn by six mules, that would be an hour or two in crossing. Then would come a column of infantry, the men marching in what is known in army phrase as "route step," which is four abreast, the men not attempting exact order, but going in a free-and-easy way, each one keeping somewhere near his place in the line. The fragment of infantry would perhaps occupy a mile or more of the road, and behind them would be a battery of artillery, with its cannon, caissons, and wagons, each drawn by six horses.

Then perhaps a company or two of cavalry would follow,—though most of these were generally kept in the advance,—then infantry again, then more wagons, etc., constituting a mixed and heterogeneous throng in which the wagons were the most conspicuous, and the men the least so of it all.

In a few days our turn came to join the forward movement, and, wending our way down the hill and through the gorge, we headed for the swinging and dancing pontoon bridge by which we were to cross into Confederate territory. When midway of the bridge I glanced upward to the towering mountains before us, and silhouetted against the sky far above their highest peak was the motionless form of a soot-hued bird, which, with wide-stretched wings facing the breeze, seemed to neither advance nor recede.

"Hen hawk?" queried one.

"Buzzard," was the brief and comprehensive answer of the veteran who had been in Virginia before.

"What makes him keep so silent and motionless?"

"He's counting us," was the laconic reply, not without a grim and smileless humor under it all.

The turkey buzzard is a southern bird, but it is a little singular that the first one which we saw was when we were in the act of crossing the Potomac, and I never saw one north of that river, though in Virginia we found myriads of them.

We did not pause in the village, but im-

mediately crossed the Shenandoah on the old wooden bridge, and began the tiresome climb of the mountains. When well up the mountainside we came to a point where, peering through the trees, we could see backward to the village and the Potomac, and the blue-tinted column with the glint of steel swaying above the blue, interspersed with horses, artillery, and canvas-topped wagons, was still winding, serpent like, along the river bank and across the bridges.

At last we emerged from the mountains and, keeping southward, skirted along their eastern base until we came to Snicker's Gap. This is not a "gap" in the ordinary sense of the word, but is a low place in the mountain over which a fairly good mountain road passes to the famous Shenandoah Valley on the other side.

It was fortunate for the health of the regiment, which was not yet fully seasoned to campaigning, that we camped here several days, for Dame Nature had kindly provided a healing balm for the ravages caused by army rations, or, as it had sometimes happened, a lack of rations. On the old fields and hillsides of these abandoned plantations had sprung up a marvellous growth of black-

berries, and they were just then in their fullest prime of ripeness. In addition to the other miseries of the past few weeks I had suffered the keenest discomfort from lack of suitable food. At times my stomach had completely revolted at the coarse diet, and I had gone a day at a time without food. As may readily be imagined, these blackberries, with their well-known healing and nourishing qualities, were for us a veritable feast of the gods.

With the restlessness of youth I one day extended my berrying tour into an exploring expedition, following up the mountain road to the summit. Leaving the road then, and climbing to a convenient peak, I was rewarded by a view—the only one I ever had—of the Shenandoah Valley. Stretching away in the distance as far as the eye could clearly distinguish the objects was a pastoral landscape of surpassing beauty; wide stretching fields with innumerable stacks of grain; undulating farms with a fertility that has made them world famous, interspersed with comfortable homesteads with granaries and corn cribs, and surrounded by their groups of little cabins; and through it all, like a silver thread in a setting of gold, twined and wound and glistened in the sun the beautiful river.

A year later the exigencies of war caused such a devastation of this valley as to justify the epigram attributed to Sheridan: "If a crow were now to fly through it he would have to carry his rations with him."

I returned safely to camp before night, and upon relating my experience I was comforted by the assurance that I had been fortunate, for I might have been picked up by Confederate scouts, who were supposed to be watching our army from every favorable peak of that range.

It was a whole month after the battle of Gettysburg before we reached the Rappahannock at Kelley's Ford, and here we established a more permanent camp. We were no longer the clean and handsome regiment of a few weeks before, whose dress parades were the delight of the Baltimore belles. This first campaign in the midsummer of an unusually hot season had been very trying, and we were foot-sore and tired, thin in flesh and ragged in clothes. The novelty of soldiering was gone and our line was sadly shortened by death and sickness, and now we were beset by the malarial fever of those lowlands, which proved more deadly, in the worn down

condition of the regiment, than the enemy's bullets had been.

The river here is a deep-flowing stream of considerable breadth, with a strength of current that made it impracticable for rapid and easy fording, hence it formed a natural front for the army. We were now some distance from the mountains, whose blue outlines formed the western horizon and suggested at once where they got the name, "Blue Ridge," and the country about us was level or rolling in its general character, but without any considerable elevations. With the habit of my life my first estimate was from the agricultural standpoint, and from this view Virginia (then and later when I tramped it from end to end) was a disappointment. With the verdant fields of Dutchess in my mind, these old lands, most of them with little or no grass, looked desolate indeed.

Under the system of farming in vogue in the slave States, they had been depleted of the wealth of fertility which was there when the country was new, and nothing had been done to restore it. When fields had been thus reduced beyond the profit limit they were left to themselves, when nature immediately took charge and began a system of

restoration by planting a thick growth of pines which soon covered the plundered soil with forest again.

Once in several miles would be found a planter's residence. Most of them were plain wooden structures, no better in any respect than farmhouses in the north, and generally not as good. But that whole country had been ridden over, tramped over, and fought over by the contending armies for two years; and fences, being the favorite material for camp-fires, had disappeared, while many—so many—homesteads were marked only by stark chimneys standing lonesome guard over the family cemetery.

Most of the plantation houses which remained were occupied, but no white men were to be seen, only women and a few negroes. The men were doubtless in the Confederate service, but the lot of their families was a hard one at the best, and bitterly though they hated us, and probably played the spy on every opportunity, yet in the interests of humanity our commanders did what they could to prevent them from being disturbed in their homes.

The midsummer weather was excessively sultry during the day, but with the coming of

night the water sprites rose from the river in the form of a mist which spread over the land, seeming to chill us to the very bones. The great increase of sickness caused a change to be made; we were moved from our open field camp on the river to a pine-covered hill a mile back, and here we suffered less from the fever-breeding night chill of the river bottom-lands.

The men had now begun to learn that to become veterans required something more than to endure hardships. It required a patient learning of sanitary camp and campaign methods, especially those of systematic and thorough cleanliness. This may sound strange to the reader who has noted that in our daily marches we had been alternately immersed in mud and dust, but it is nevertheless true that it is almost impossible to maintain any degree of health in campaigning unless every opportunity is improved to make the body and all its surroundings clean. We soon learned, too, that it is not well in that malarial country to sleep on the ground when it can be avoided. In this camp we set crotches, and with saplings for bed-slats and pine boughs for mattresses we had beds a foot or so from the ground. Defective

culinary education was probably also responsible for much sickness.

Yet, despite all the precautions the Medical Director could suggest, or the Colonel could have carried out, the sick list was very large.

In connection with our stay at this camp there was a curious incident which deserves to be recorded. Among the sick was Albert Reed of my own company. His father, the late Newton Reed, learning that he was sinking, hastened to Washington, and procuring a pass to enter the lines took the railroad to Bealton, then its limit. Here he secured permission to ride on an army baggage wagon some ten miles farther. Finding himself still some miles from our camp, he inquired the direction and struck across the fields on foot. As he passed to the rear of an old plantation house he came to the family cemetery, and his eye was caught by a familiar name; pausing, he read:

“ANNA MARIA TAYLOR.
Born in Amenia, N. Y.”

In my early childhood Miss Taylor was a near neighbor. She was a young woman of excellent qualities of mind and character, and

she cherished a noble ambition, quite in advance of her time, to do something for herself and make her way in the world. With this in view she completed her education at the Amenia (N. Y.) Seminary, then one of the best educational institutions open to women. Soon afterward she was offered and accepted an engagement as teacher in the family of a Virginia planter. In her new surroundings she made many friends, but she sickened and died before the war, probably never dreaming that dozens of her school-mates and friends would camp within sight of her grave, and I deem it a most singular coincidence that her neighbor and personal friend should have found it in such an unexpected manner.

Since then a still more striking coincidence has come to my knowledge. Just before the war a young German, John Lauth by name, came to this country and made it his home for a time with his married sister, who was a near neighbor of Miss Taylor's mother. Upon the breaking out of the war he took the field in defence of his new-found country, enlisting in a New York regiment. In August, 1862, his sister received a letter from him in which the following incident was related.

His regiment, then in Virginia, had been engaged in a sharp skirmish with the enemy. His company's position was such that he was in a small cemetery plot near a plantation house, and directly in front of him was one of the marble slabs. During the engagement the man on his right was killed, and the one on his left was mortally wounded. The latter gave his expensive gold watch to Lauth, and told him to keep it in remembrance of their friendship. But the young German, unaccustomed to American usages and not knowing whether he would be permitted to keep it, nor, in fact, whether he might not be made a prisoner before the conflict was ended, with his bayonet dug a hole next the stone and wrapping the watch in an old handkerchief buried it there. After the fight was over he went to the front of the stone in order to be able to identify the place. First he noticed that a bullet, probably intended for himself, had flattened against it. Then he copied the inscription as follows:

“—— TAYLOR,
Born in Amenias, N. Y.”

Even the gravestone of the Northern girl

had seemed to stand in silent protest, stopping the bullet aimed at the Northern soldier. Lauth's sister related these facts to Mrs. Taylor (the letter was written in German), and thus twice during the war did the widowed mother receive a message from her daughter's grave in the Southland.

It only remains to be added that Mr. Lauth returned to Virginia after the war and secured the watch, which he still has.





CHAPTER IX

FROM VIRGINIA TO ALABAMA

Forward to the Rapidan—A Military Execution, and how it was Conducted—Moved to the Western Army—Incidents on the Way—Guarding Railroad in Tennessee—Topography of the State.

IT was a tedious August and September that we passed in Virginia. The Rappahannock was our front, and daily there sat on his horse the enemy's picket, in plain view of our camp. It seemed that nothing was being done. But all unknown to us a new element had taken control of the war. The Vicksburg campaign had shown Grant to be possessed of military talents of the highest order. The Mississippi "flowed unvexed to the sea" once more, and his forces were even then marching to the relief of the beleaguered Chattanooga and Knoxville. The crisis of disaster was past and the march to victory

begun, though there was still a year and a half of the bloodiest months of the war to follow.

One day, in the cooler air of autumn, there was a stir and bustle in camp, rumors of something to be done, and soon it became known that we had marching orders. Great scows were floated out and anchored in a line across the river, and timbers laid in succession from one to the other were covered with plank, forming in an hour an army pontoon bridge. It was strong enough to sustain the heaviest artillery, but danced and swayed in the current in a way quite bewildering to horses unaccustomed to such things. Soon there was pouring across for hours in succession a solid column of men, horses, wagons, and cannon. But we moved only a few miles south and again went into camp, this time on the north bank of the Rapidan, at Raccoon Ford.

It was while at this place that we witnessed a military execution, one of the very few that I saw. For military offences the penalty provided, in a majority of cases, is "death, or such other punishment as a court-martial may determine." In this case the court-martial had imposed the extreme penalty for

desertion. It was an aggravated case for it was the third offence and was "in the face of the enemy." It was deemed necessary, therefore, to make it an example.

One forenoon we received the order, "Fall in without knapsacks," and were marched to a broad, open field. Here the division was formed on three sides of a hollow square. On the fourth side there was a new grave and beside it stood a coffin—a rough pine box. The guard came marching in with the culprit accompanied by the chaplain. He was placed facing the grave, with the coffin between. We were not near enough to hear what was said, but we presently saw the firing detail arranged on the other side of the chasm. Then the prisoner was blindfolded and the guard withdrew, and after a little time the chaplain walked slowly to one side.

There was a pause of suspense, and in another moment the poor fellow was suddenly hidden from view by a cloud of smoke from the guns, while the crash of the volley, rolling back in solemn echoes from the forest, was his only requiem, and the tragedy was ended. But from a military point of view this was not sufficient; the execution was for moral effect, and the troops must have their object-

lesson completed. So the corpse was arranged in the coffin, with the clothing opened on the breast to show the ghastly bullet holes, and the whole division was marched past, parting ranks and passing on each side of the remains. Then the bands, which had played dead marches in the assembling, struck up quick-step tunes and we marched away to the camp by lively music.

In after conversation with the men I learned some of the details of these executions. The American citizen soldier was of so different a character from the European model, that to get him to play the rôle of executioner of his comrades was not always easy, and the exercise of some ingenuity was necessary in order to accomplish it. As a rule he was not afraid of his officers, and was not abashed or humble in their presence. While he submitted to military discipline as a necessary part of the service, both the privates and officers knew that their relative positions were but temporary at the best. To be coldly selected for the task would be considered a degradation, and would awaken a feeling of animosity that no officer liked to kindle against himself, for privates sometimes have ways of getting even.

So the detail, in order to give an appearance of perfect impartiality, were selected by lot. Even then they were not permitted to load the guns themselves, but they were loaded beforehand and brought to them. Half of them were loaded with ball and the remainder with blank cartridges, so that even in the firing each might think that perhaps his own shot was a blank; that perhaps he did not really take the life after all.

After remaining in this camp for a week, we again strapped our knapsacks and this time marched northward for several days until we came to the railroad. Here we loaded into freight cars at the rate of fifty to the car, and sped on northward over Long Bridge and through the city of Washington,—then scarce a prophecy of its present self,—and away westward by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Our course took us past Harper's Ferry again,—haunted by its already historic tragedies,—where the river which we saw a few hours before floating a navy on its calm bosom here assumes the rôle of a roaring giant as it dashes through the narrow gorge, where it so abruptly deserts the Cumberland Valley.

We followed up the river, which, as we

sped on, changed its character with the consummate skill of a harlequin. From the foaming main it changed to the peaceful expanse flowing between brown meadow banks; then shrunk to a creek, the creek to a mountain torrent, and the torrent to a brook which was finally lost to view, and presently we found ourselves gliding down the western slope of the Alleghanies and speeding away through the endless corn-fields of Ohio and Indiana to Indianapolis. Thence our course was southward through Kentucky and Tennessee, until we finally disembarked in the northern edge of Alabama.

It must not be supposed that our train was an express, either in its equipment or its method of travel, and the journey was by no means as brief as my description of it might lead one to suppose, for it had consumed more than a week. To move an army a thousand miles by rail, mostly over single-tracked roads that are doing other business at the same time, was a ponderous task that must have taxed the executive ability of both government officers and railroad men, for ours was but one in a long succession of trains. Sometimes we would be side-tracked for

hours at a time, and I do not think a day passed in which our train was not halted an hour or two somewhere near woods and fields. This gave us an opportunity to do a little cooking, and if a convenient creek was at hand hundreds of naked forms would soon be seen glistening in the sunlight, for the men were eager now to improve every opportunity to bathe.

But the scenery was not all of the character of fields and woods, for we sometimes came to great rivers, and ever and anon the train trundled through city streets where our eyes, so long limited to scenes of camp and field, would be refreshed by the glad sight of ladies and children in holiday attire, attracted by the novel sight of freight trains loaded, both in the cars and on top as well, with soldiers.

We reached the Ohio River at Benwood, four miles below Wheeling, and here we disembarked and crossed the river on a pontoon bridge to a train we found in waiting on the other side. At Zanesville, Ohio, there was an incident which, though trivial in itself, managed to linger in the memory, perhaps because of its suggested but unrevealed background of possible tragedy.

The train had halted, and at the risk of being left behind I walked and ran a mile to the market to secure something appetizing. Attracted by some fresh-looking water-melons I selected two, but when about to pay for them I was anticipated by a lady who stood near, though she had not spoken to me before. I thanked her, but assured her that I had plenty of money for present needs, but she would not be refused, and as she still insisted I could not do otherwise than acquiesce. She was pleasant and ladylike in her appearance, dressed in the deepest black, and in age I judged was on that vague neutral ground called "middle life." But what impressed me most was that over her pale, refined face there flitted never the ghost of a smile, even when I bade her good-by.

The act of good-will towards a Union soldier, the dress of deep mourning, and the sorrow-imprinted face; what was the story behind it all? I never knew.

When we reached Zenia we found a condition of organized enthusiasm in the town, which was made evident by a band of ladies that passed along the train as soon as it halted, armed with packages which they distributed among us. Each package contained

a sandwich and some added delicacies, and lest the food should not prove to be a sufficient indication of their good-will, as soon as the distribution was completed they collected in a body on the platform at the station and sang patriotic airs as the train moved out.

The novelty of the ride, and the ever-changing scenery and experiences as we sped along, was refreshing after our dreary round of duties in the Virginia camps, and the barometer of regimental spirits rose perceptibly. This mountain region of Northern Alabama, where we had finally disembarked, with its springs and cascades, its mountain valleys and towering crags, and the deep-flowing, silent, and majestic Tennessee River, was in striking contrast to the desolate sun-baked plains we had just left. We had been more than a week on the road, and now began a series of marchings to and fro and up and down the railroad, seemingly following orderless orders and undirected directions.

But I have no doubt that all this restless moving about from point to point was deemed necessary, for—though we in the ranks did not know it—we were not far from a vigilant enemy, and it was necessary to keep an active lookout at a time when there

was necessarily much confusion attendant upon unloading such quantities of troops and stores. In time, order was evolved out of chaos, and the two army corps transported from the Army of the Potomac were once more on their feet and able to take the offensive or defensive at a moment's notice.

Our division (the First) was now detached from its corps (the Twelfth), marched northward into Middle Tennessee, and posted along the railroad leading from Nashville to Chattanooga, to guard it from "guerillas," wandering bands of lawless men who were not enlisted in any army. Their object was usually robbery, and they employed the methods of assassins and incendiaries. The remainder of the corps pushed on to the vicinity of Chattanooga, and there participated in the victories of Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain.

Those who are interested in these vagrant recollections will be well repaid by a brief glance at the map to refresh their memories in reference to the locality of which I write. Tennessee is bounded on the east by a portion of the Alleghany Mountains, while the Cumberland Mountains divide the State from northeast to southwest. Between these parallel

ridges of the Appalachian range lies the valley known as "East Tennessee," with Chattanooga at its southern extremity. The Tennessee River, flowing southward across the State in East Tennessee, washes the base of Lookout Mountain, which stands in Georgia. At this point it turns westward and begins its tortuous course by which it makes its way through the Cumberland Mountains, passing through Alabama, carving a corner from Mississippi, and again crossing Tennessee to the north.

This breaking through the mountains by the great river made a natural highway for armies, for near the southern part of East Tennessee are also the headwaters of the Oostenaula River, flowing southward, and hence Chattanooga became known as a point of strategic importance, the "gateway to the Confederacy." In November, 1863, there were great struggles for the possession of this point, which became known as the battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge, and the gateway became ours from that time on.



CHAPTER X

A WINTER IN TENNESSEE

The Country was Then New—Characteristics of the Natives—Did n't Know the Flag—Leaves from an Old Magazine—The Regiment Makes its Own Bread—Interviewing Confederate Prisoners.

MIDDLE Tennessee has a fine rolling surface resting on limestone formation. I shall always remember its pleasant little valleys, divided by rocky ridges full of miniature caves, affording the greatest variety and beauty of landscape. It was then essentially a new country, and there were miles and miles of stately forest unshorn by the axe, where wild turkey and deer were still abundant, and that truly antipodean quadruped, the opossum, was plentiful and toothsome. Our headquarters for the winter was in the little hamlet of Normandy, of

which one of the boys wrote in his home letter as follows:

“Normandy is a little village which formerly supported a store, blacksmith’s shop, and fifty or sixty hounds, besides cur dogs too numerous to mention.”

This pithy sentence seems to give an illuminating view of the outward aspect of the place, and if I quote a little further from the same letter it will serve to show one at least of the characteristics of the rising generation in that Tennessee village. The letter continues as follows:

“The use of tobacco by the native population here is astonishing, even to a soldier, especially when we see the other sex chew ‘navy plug’ while they mix bread; or indulge in smoking, varied by rubbing snuff on the gums. A boy from back in the country stayed with us one night, who called himself thirteen years old. As we sat around the fire in the evening he asked for a ‘chaw.’ After one had been given him and he had placed it in the aching void we asked him how long he had used the article.

“‘Wall,’ said he, ‘I reckon as how I’ve used it about ten year.’ Let no one hereafter call nicotine a poison.”

These neighbors of ours were the typical farmers of Middle Tennessee; quite a different class by the way from the blue-grass landlord of Kentucky with his thousands of acres, or the cotton planter of Alabama who numbered his slaves by hundreds. Some or most of them had probably been in the Confederate service, but they took good care not to mention it to us, and our relations remained pleasant and neighborly throughout the winter.

But with them the national thought had been so little cultivated that they were not even familiar with the nation's flag. One of them asked one day if the "blue spot in the corner" was "suthen new." "Reckon I do'n' remember to have seen it befo'." Anywhere else such infantile ignorance would have excited suspicion at once as being an attempt at guying. But to suspect one of those stolid and ignorant Tennessee farmers of such talent for humor would be inadmissible. No, the truth was that they had probably never seen a United States flag before the arrival of our troops, for before the war our flag was seldom seen in the South outside the cities.

A curious sidelight is thrown on this atti-

tude of the South towards the nation years before the war, by an article which strangely travelled around until it finally reached the person about whom it was written. During the winter of our stay there an expedition was fitted out from the regiment to go into another county and there collect a tax levied upon it for murders committed by guerillas. Among those detailed for it was our 1st Lieutenant, Henry Gridley, and during the tour he found and sent home some leaves from *Le Bow's Magazine*, published in New Orleans and containing a letter from a correspondent at Galveston Bay, Texas. The date of the article is March, 1851, and it contains this suggestive sentence:

“And should the North, at length, in the madness of fanaticism, rend asunder the Union, the South would be prepared for the consequences.” Thus the “rend-asunder-the-Union” thought was abroad in the South even then, ten years before the war.

The article itself was a description of Mr. Gail Borden's meat biscuits, then undertaken in Texas. It was one of his first experiments in making condensed food, and was tried some years before he went to Wassaic, N. Y., where he accomplished his first real success

by making condensed milk. He was a near neighbor of Lieutenant Gridley's home, and when this article was placed in his hand it must have seemed like an echo from a past existence.

Lieutenant Gridley was killed in battle on the following summer, and the bullet which pierced his heart sped northward and sore wounded a large circle of friends and relatives. He graduated at Amherst in the class of '62, and was loved and trusted by all who knew him; was spotless in character and a goodly man to look upon, for he stood above six feet tall and was straight and muscular as an Indian. He was my schoolmate at the *Amenia* (N. Y.) Seminary, and there comes to my mind a couplet of his class song, which in a half-earnest, half-whimsical vein, gave expression to his fellow-students' admiration:

“Colossal in statue Henry Gridley is seen,
But no less gigantic in mind than in mien.”

A sense of awe comes over one when we reflect that his was one in nearly a million lives that were sacrificed by the war. A million men standing in a single line, shoulder to shoulder, would make a line some four or five

hundred miles in length. They were men in the prime of life, and in both the North and South they represented something more than "the average man." Who can estimate the loss to the nation? Nor does the thought stop here, for besides the relatives bereft, the sacrifice involved the necessity that nearly a million women must live their lives thenceforth unmated, whether as widows or maids.

We had most of the time drawn for rations those peculiarly hard and tough army crackers known in the vernacular as "hard-tack." There was a joke current in the ranks in regard to this hard-tack. At one time large amounts of it were made for the government by a certain contractor by the name of Benjamin Cozzens, and the initials of his name appeared on each cracker. The men always insisted that these letters referred to the date of its manufacture, for it must be confessed that they were not always as fresh as we could have wished.

However that might have been, the Colonel concluded arrangements by which we were enabled to draw, in this winter camp, flour instead of hard-tack. There was no lack of trades among us, and the masons detailed for the work tore down the chimney in an unused

house in order to obtain brick, and built some of the large, old - fashioned, dome - shaped brick ovens, such as our grandmothers used. The carpenter, using boards taken from the same house that furnished the brick, made large bread trays and moulding boards. When all was ready two men were detailed from the ranks to do the baking.

“What!” exclaims some twentieth-century housekeeper, who deems her lot a hard one because she has to make with her own hands, and bake in a modern range, bread for a family of three; “you don’t mean to say that two had to do all the baking for those hundreds of hungry men?”

Certainly; they brought their water from the river, moulded the dough by hand, weighing it out into loaves of exact size, and baked it in the old-fashioned brick ovens out of doors. They did this easily and had leisure time to spare. Every morning each man in the regiment received a loaf of exact weight, and it was always of the best quality. There is never any “luck” in bread-making when it is done by men.

The railroad which we were guarding was a single-tracked road of old-fashioned construction, but it was an exceedingly impor-

tant road just then, for it was the only means of supplying our army at Chattanooga, five hundred miles from its base of supplies at Nashville. Hence the duty of guarding it was not without responsibilities. For its defence several stockades were built at important points, and while they would have been no protection whatever against artillery, they would have furnished a good temporary defence against roving bands of cavalry. But we never had to use them.

In the battles about Chattanooga a large number of prisoners had been taken, and they were sent north by this line. Sometimes a train-load of prisoners would stand on the side-track for an hour or so, and it gave us a good opportunity to converse with "our friends, the enemy." Such conversation was usually in a friendly vein, on our side at least, though chaffing and repartee were indulged in by both parties. It afforded a good opportunity, too, for the study of "English as she is spoke," and some could make shrewd guesses at the nativity of certain Southerners by their peculiarities of speech. In conversing with one I detected the use of a phrase and accent which reminded me of Baltimore, and I asked him if he were not from Mary-

land. He replied that he was, and immediately added that he thought I was from New York. This suggested that possibly there was a provincialism of the North, as well as a provincialism of the South; something I had not thought of before.

The comparative leisure this camp afforded was not without some amusements, which were eagerly made use of. Though the debating club languished, the card and domino parties never did. The men in the ranks could not be away in the night without permission, but we in the band enjoyed a little more freedom, and there was one thing we especially enjoyed, and that was 'possum and 'coon hunts in the night.

We never asked permission from headquarters to go, for we knew it would not be granted, and if the august authorities ever suspected our escapades they probably thought it not worth while to notice them.

We would collect a dozen or so of the hounds in the neighborhood, and after dark steal out into the woods. As we knew exactly where the pickets were it was easy for us to pass between them in the darkness, and after getting well beyond the lines we would turn the dogs loose and then sit down and

wait for the yelping bark which indicated that they were in pursuit. Then it was with difficulty that the impatient ones could be restrained until we heard the other cry; the deep-mouthed, measured, and more deliberate baying, indicating that the quarry was "treed."

If it was "a 'possum up a gum tree," it was easy to climb and, bringing him down, carry the nondescript quadruped home alive, for he seemed to be perfectly content when carried by the tail. But the raccoon took to larger trees, and these we sometimes had to chop down.

We soon learned the art of cooking our game by the "kettle-roast" process, using some large baking-kettles which we found in the neighborhood. No more delicious morsel was ever placed on a table than the fine roasted opossum of Tennessee; it has somewhat the quality of the erstwhile popular roast pig of New England, with an added richness and the piquancy of a certain gamey flavor.

One night, after our return from one of our hunting excursions, we found a lively interest in camp in regard to a line of fires which were visible in the distance. Some thought it

must be a camp of guerillas, while others thought it might be a scouting band of our own cavalry, which had gone into camp there. They were fires which we had kindled, but the night guard seemed so interested in the spectacle that we crept quietly to bed, for we had n't the heart to break in upon their enjoyment by admitting that we had had anything to do with it.

Our winter here was a pleasant interval of war experience, and during the time we were reinforced by the recovery and return of some who had been taken to hospitals on account of sickness and wounds.





CHAPTER XI

OVER THE CUMBERLAND MOUNTAINS

The Imp in the Attic—Leaving the Winter Camp—Hardening to the Work—Last Camp in Middle Tennessee—Climbing the Mountain Range—Rivalry of Regiments—Nick-a-jack Cave and its Blood-Curdling Traditions.

FLORENCE PERCY, in an exquisite little poem, represents Memory as a droll fellow dwelling in the upper story and having charge of all the facts and figures that are placed in his keeping. She calls this keeper of the psychological storehouse of past events "*The Imp in the Attic.*" Some of the valuables placed in his charge are lost, and some are only found after long searching; and it is to be noted also that the controlling Imp of each attic has idiosyncrasies quite his own.

Now that these events of the war have receded into the far past and can only be

viewed from the beginning of another century, it will not surprise the reader that my Imp has tired of presenting the record in panoramic continuity, but sometimes prefers instead to give a series of views, each clear and distinct in itself, but not always sufficient for a continuous narrative. Thus many scenes and events are indelibly stamped upon my memory, undimmed by the passing of time, while others of equal or perhaps greater importance I am unable to recall in their proper order. Did not these memories touch here and there with persons and events of a later date I should sometimes doubt their reality and be disposed to think they belonged in some pre-existent state.

When the soft, warm days of spring came, it was made known that we had marching orders. We were to join our corps at the front, while newer troops were to take our place in guarding the railroad. There was great stir in camp, and even the mules, who had grown fat and dull, caught the excitement. Their loud braying when once interpreted by the camp wits, sounded like this, "Jo-o-o *Hook-er, Hook-er, Hook-er!*"

Just as the leaves were putting forth and the banks and roadsides were fragrant with

masses of wild flowers, we marched out of our winter camp and turned our faces southward. From the northeast to the south the blue Cumberland Mountains rose against the sky, their sides gashed by deep gorges and broken by jutting spurs, but their top bounding the horizon by a clear, straight line, as if it had been planed off by some mighty glacier. Steadily for several days we marched southward until we reached Decherd, a small country village and station on the railroad, and this was our last camp in the valley of Middle Tennessee.

This section, as I have said, was still a new country, and it had many of the frontier characteristics of that day. Many of the houses, even of those who owned plantations, were small log houses, and those which were of sawed lumber were of the plainest description. I do not remember that I saw a plastered house in that part of the State. The chimneys were invariably on the outside of the house, and, what seemed to us a peculiar feature, many of them were built of wood. Rived staves of oak were laid up "cob-house fashion," and the interior being plastered with clay they answered the purpose of a chimney for that climate, though it was said

that they were wont to catch fire on windy nights.

Of the white inhabitants we saw only a few women and children. There were probably men concealed not far off, but they did not show themselves, for doubtless some of them disliked to be too closely questioned in regard to certain mishaps on the railroad in that vicinity but a short time before. Some rails had been misplaced and a portion of a train wrecked.

With our last year's experience in battle and camp we felt that we could now fairly claim to be called veterans. We had learned, to the last fine details, the art of housekeeping without a house: we could avail ourselves quickly and easily of every method and convenience that could be brought into use, and we had learned—the greatest lesson of all for men leaving a long camp—just what to leave behind. Little household idols will accumulate in even a temporary stopping-place that it seems hard to abandon, but they must be left behind.

For the men in the ranks the arms and ammunition must go where the men go. Next in importance, the thing to stick by and die by if necessary is the canteen, for water is

sometimes more important than food. Especially is this true in case of loss of blood from wounds, for the great necessity then is water to drink. After these articles comes the light woollen blanket, the half-tent, the haversack containing three days' rations, and possibly a rubber blanket to lie on at night, though the government did not furnish this.

The articles which I have enumerated are about load enough for the best and strongest of men to carry on such campaigns as our Civil War afforded, and he was the wisest who took but few additional things, such as soap, towel, etc., with the inevitable little hatchet, a few cooking utensils, and one or two extra pairs of stockings, for the feet which carried the loads so many miles must have the best of care.

"But one must have a change of clothing in the course of the summer!" you exclaim.

Do not attempt it. Wash your clothes at night when you can, drying them by the camp-fire. If you happen to do it by day and suddenly have orders to march, put them on wet; it will not hurt you. Draw new clothes as often as you can; they will be charged to your account and you will not mind the expense; but never, as you value

your expectations of seeing home again, attempt to carry extra clothing on a summer campaign.

We were fresh and strong now, stepping the miles off easily as jibe and jest, laughter and song passed along the line. It was just as the sun was sinking in the west that we reached Decherd and saw the column ahead filing into the fields to make camp. Then there came galloping towards us a mounted orderly who, saluting the Colonel, said, "General Ruger directs that you go into camp on the right of the 3d Wisconsin, and he directs me to show you the position." Then we file into the fields, as the others before us have been doing, while the wagons are being parked at one side of the field. Details for picket duty are told off rapidly, and as they march away to their duties beyond the outskirts of the camp we hear in quick succession the Colonel's orders: "Front face." "Stack arms." "Break ranks;—*march.*"

Then follows a scamper over the fields to gather rails for camp-fires, and little saplings to furnish poles and pins for the tents, and soon the plantation is dotted with white tents, and numerous camp-fires are sending up their columns of smoke. Each fire is the

centre of a little group, wrangling, shouting, and laughing as they prepare supper. When supper is ended pipes are lit for the brief respite between eating and sleeping, and the bands ring out lively and inspiriting music.

Then as the fires grow dim and twilight fades, the forms vanish one by one; but the great Cumberland Mountain in our front, which had looked so bonny and bright in the distance, grows sombre and threatening as it rises sullenly against the southern sky. To-morrow we must scale the mountain, but to-night—never mind; we are fast asleep without a care, and the camp is sunk in a silence that is absolute, for insomnia is the one disease that never invades the field.

At the earliest dawn the silent air was pierced with the strident notes of a bugle near at hand, and in an instant night seemed to have been routed and was in full retreat among the mists up the mountain. Then followed a busy hour, men running to the brook for water and to the now rapidly vanishing remnants of the rail fence for more fuel with which to replenish the fires. How fresh and clean the morning air seemed, and how the mountains echoed and re-echoed the lively strains of band music and mimicked

the screaming bugle. Fried pork and hard-tack, with milkless and sugarless coffee! Did any one ever taste such a good breakfast before!

Our fatigue had vanished with the night, and we noted that our feet, which had swollen with the constant pressure and strain of carrying the loads, had begun to diminish in size and recover a little of their normal hardness, with increased strength and toughness. We were getting hardened to our work. The soldier soon learns not to remove much clothing at night, but he always removes his shoes and stockings, if situated so that he can. "It gives the feet a chance to rest," was the oft-repeated phrase. An hour after the bugle had called us the column was winding out of the fields into the highway again. Such a camp as this had been was a delight and a joy, but not all of our camps were of that character.

The road up the mountain was fairly good, and was not over-steep at any point; but as it climbed on and on, winding in and out of the gorges, it was almost constant up-hill work. This mountain climb was fixed in my mind by an incident of the rivalry of regiments which sometimes cropped out. For

some reasons well understood by veterans, but not so easy to explain to those who have not had the experience, marching at the rear of a long column is much harder work than it is to march at the head of the same column.

As it happened, this day our place was at the rear of the brigade, and the pace was set by the regiment which had the lead, and a hard pace it proved to be. It taxed the courage and grit of the regiment to the utmost, but there was a spirit and pride about it all; for nothing short of necessity would one fall out and be picked up by the ambulance. At last the mountain-top was reached and it proved to be as level as it had appeared from the distance. We continued along the top until we came near a little stream, where we went into camp just at dark. We were more fatigued than we had been at any time since we left the winter camp, and dire were the threats about what we would do to "that blasted regiment" if we ever got the chance. The opportunity came sooner than we expected, and it was fully improved.

The very next day we were assigned to lead the brigade, and the regiment which had led us such a merry dance up the mountain-

side the day before was placed at the tail end of the march. There had been a sombre cloud on Colonel Ketcham's ruddy brow the night before, and this morning, as he mounted his horse and turned to ride to the head, there was a little nervous twitching about his red beard that betokened something at work in his mind. He had noted the situation on the day before, but had said nothing, for he was not a talker. We had not marched many miles before we knew what he was thinking of, for he was leading off at a "reaching gait." The rests were short and few, and as he saw that the spirit of the thing was understood in the ranks, and that all were keeping up well, he increased the marching speed.

The way was an unbroken forest and there was little undergrowth. The road wound up and down over the undulating surface, and for the most of the distance there was hardly any drift over the rough rock surface, and what little there was, was largely of broken rock, with no soil to speak of. The mountain air was exhilarating and our woes of yesterday were forgotten as we swept on and on. Twenty miles we covered, and then we suddenly came to the southern edge of the mountain plateau we had been traversing. The

road down the southern face of this mountain can only be so termed by courtesy. It was a path, a scramble, a slide, a zig-zag, a—well, anything but a road. How the wagons were got down I never knew. They must have been eased down with ropes in some places.

Having descended at last, we found ourselves in a narrow side valley walled in by lofty mountains, and fed by great springs which poured in volumes from the base of the cliffs; and now the rain began to descend, a steady and incessant downpour. When we halted for dinner about noon, we had covered nearly thirty miles since breakfast. In an incredibly short time there were hundreds of fires sending up their smoke clouds in defiance of the rain, and around each was a group of men holding little tin coffee pails over the fire on the ends of sticks, looking for all the world as if they might be fishing for salamanders.

But what of that regiment with which we had hoped to get even—the one which had led us so jauntily the day preceding? They came grumbling and straggling in, foot-sore and fagged, and half the dinner hour was gone before they had all come up. We triumphed in the fact that they never again tried to “push” us on the march.

In the afternoon we followed this little valley—more like a cañon than a valley—to the Tennessee River. Wearied with the fatigue of crossing the mountain, and soaked to the skin, we pitched our little tents in the grass of the river bottom-lands, and, crawling under them, we slept in spite of wet clothes, wet grass, and wet everything; and I did not catch cold. I, for whom colds had been the bane of early life, never caught cold sleeping out of doors. This suggests that the “cold” microbe is kept alive in the house, and that the scientific house-cleaning of the future will include disinfection by some means.

But this camp was not as cheerful as the one of two days before at Decherd.

This passage of the Tennessee River through the mountains affords some of the most picturesque and impressive scenery that I have ever met with. At places there are beautiful plantations on a wide expanse of plain and meadow, which extend for miles away from the river to where they meet the mountain bluffs. Frequently, however, the mountains close in, the valley disappears, and the river holds its deep and silent course between lofty crags, along the foot of which the road winds in and out. Following up

the course of the river we camped one night near a famous cavern known as "Nick-a-jack cave," said to be several miles in extent, rivalling Mammoth Cave in Kentucky.

There are blood-curdling and romantic traditions connecting this place with the early history of this section. Migration in those days did not rush over the world by steam as at a later date, but moved forward step by step. The water transportation afforded by this river, however, enabled it to pass the Cumberland range at one great stride. The hardy Virginians clambered over the Blue Ridge into East Tennessee, and, launching their boats upon the river, quietly floated their goods and families hundreds of miles to the promised land of West Tennessee, and even to Kentucky.

But there dwelt in this cave a powerful band of Indians, and as their hiding-place could not be found they ambushed and preyed upon parties of emigrants. They murdered one whole party except a little boy, whom they took to this cave and brought up as one of their number. But he remembered his people, and when he was eighteen years old escaped and made his way back to Virginia, where he organized a party which he

led for weeks through the mountain by paths known only to Indians, until they reached this hiding-place, where the tribe was completely surprised and most of them killed.

But these legends of Indian warfare were almost obliterated by the greater magnitude of the white man's war, for the State had been fought over before we came there and was destined to be again fought over before the close of the war.





CHAPTER XII

OLD BATTLEFIELDS

Lookout Mountain and its Surroundings—Gateway of the Confederacy—Battles and Battlefields of the Previous Year—River of Death—"Fighting Joe" Hooker—General Sherman, then and afterward—What is Meant by "Flanking."

IN due time we reached Lookout Mountain, and following the military road up its side and around its northern end there was stretched out before us a scene of surpassing interest, and my Imp has preserved it with such fidelity that if I were an artist I do not doubt that I could, from memory alone, place it on canvas to-day. We were on or near the ground where Hooker fought his romantic "battle above the clouds" the autumn before. The right of his line of battle extended upward nearly to the mountain's summit, and while there was a bank of mist and cloud

resting about its base and obscuring that portion from view, those near the top could be plainly seen from Grant's headquarters; hence the seemingly fanciful phrase was literally true.

To the northeast and in plain view of this place the battle of Missionary Ridge was fought on the day succeeding the battle of Lookout Mountain. The two were, in fact, but the two days' fighting of what was really but one battle. At the southeast was the battlefield of Chickamauga, and a few miles to the north of where we stood was the town of Chattanooga, since grown to be a city of mining and industrial importance, while far to the northward extended the valley of East Tennessee, and west of us were the mountains through which we had come. This was, indeed, a "gateway" through which we were entering, and within sight of this spot had been enacted military achievements which it would require a volume to properly describe, and which have been classed by military critics as equal in brilliancy of thought and execution to any of Napoleon's famous exploits.

But there is much besides the talents and genius of generals that sometimes has to do

with the outcome of battles, and the conflict at Missionary Ridge illustrated this.

Grant had carefully planned just how the action was to be conducted. He had directed a "demonstration" in front, in which the troops were ordered to capture and hold the first line of works and then halt and wait for other operations, for the enemy's second and third lines seemed to be almost impregnable in their position, and even Grant would not waste lives in attempting their capture. But like the best laid plans of men and mice, these plans did not carry. The troops did indeed capture the enemy's first line, though with considerable effort and loss, and here they should have halted as ordered; but not so.

Success was in the air; the enemy were fleeing up the hill. Grant, standing on a hill where he could watch the whole action with his glass, saw the men scramble over the breastworks with a cheer, but to his amazement he saw them push on up the hill with waving flags, unchecked by the belching cannon at the top or the blazing rifles in the second line of works, and firing as they climbed. Over the second line they rushed, and still on they clambered up the rugged hill until they actually captured the third and

last line of the enemy's works. The battle was won without orders—against orders, in fact.

There is nothing that succeeds like success. If this movement had failed there would have been a long series of investigations and court-martials. But no one cares to find fault with success.

We had now become in reality a part of the western army, having joined our Corps, the Twelfth, which had lately been consolidated with the Eleventh. The new body thus formed, being designated the Twentieth Army Corps, was placed under command of General Joseph Hooker.

"Fighting Joe," as he was generally called, was the very ideal of a corps commander. The fact that he had failed to fully oust the Washington politicians from the command of the Army of the Potomac was no more than was true of all his predecessors, and if he was sometimes a little touchy towards his superior officers that fact did not militate against his popularity with the rank and file. True he had the reputation of working and fighting his corps most unflinchingly, but he also had the record of successes, as well as of being exceedingly careful and considerate of the

welfare of his men. He was a superb horseman, and in time of action seemed to be always present and always happy. His really manly qualities were so evident that it was no wonder he was popular.

My own judgment at this distance of time is that the handling of a corps was about the limit of his capacity as a general, but that up to that point few, if any, were his superiors.

General Grant had been summoned to the command of all the forces of the Union, and in his place there was a new man, up to that time but little heard of. In one of our daily marches we met a little cavalcade of horsemen, and riding at their head was an officer of somewhat striking appearance. He was tall and spare in form, and there was expressed in his bearing that which was the extreme opposite of inertia or sluggishness. His whole manner, whether in standing or riding, seemed the outward expression of exquisite life which vibrated through every fibre of his being.

It was General Sherman, the new Commander of the army to which we were then attached, and from that time to the close of the war his was a familiar figure. So spontaneous and rapid was his own manner that he seemed sometimes impatient at the

slowness of others. This restiveness was by some persons mistakenly attributed to nervousness.

A few weeks later I saw him standing on a battlefield and surrounded as before by his staff. The battle had begun and the bullets were singing past, but his seeming nervousness had now disappeared, and he was apparently the coolest and most unconcerned of the whole group of officers.

A quarter of a century later I met him at a private social affair, which gave me an opportunity for personal and social intercourse with this remarkable man, now famous in song and history. He had then nearly reached his three-score years and ten, yet while his beard and hair were white as snow, his form was but slightly bent, and his face, over which towered the striking forehead, looked as natural as ever. Alike in private conversation and in public reception he impressed me the same as before: that the preponderating element in his being was abundant life,—using the word in its fullest and completest sense,—life of the will, intellect, and body; both subjective and creative life.

He was by far the most intellectual officer

of any who gained prominence during the war, and I once heard General Kilpatrick speak of him as the greatest soldier he ever knew. He had seen three years of service, much of it under Grant, and at the time of which I write—the spring of '64—he began his career as the successful commander of a large army.

After leaving the vicinity of Lookout Mountain our march continued eastward and southeastward. There followed days and nights of the usual campaign experience of an army, in which physical endurance is put to the utmost test of its staying quality. As I once heard a veteran say,—and he spoke a great truth,—“One who has not served in the army does not know the meaning of the word ‘tired.’”

When men are thoroughly “tired,” they have then only begun to do what they are capable of doing and what they are frequently obliged to accomplish in war, and the phrase, “completely exhausted,” means to a soldier nothing short of death. That an army could, as a whole, endure such conditions was partly at least accounted for by the fact that they were a selected class of men, and no one was enrolled without first passing a rigorous phy-

sical examination. Then, too, the rank and file were composed, for the most part, of men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, a time when the elasticity and recuperating power of youth are still retained, and when the currents of life are running at their strongest spring-tide. But the severity of the conditions is attested by the records, which show that, even with this selected class, the hardships killed twice as many as the guns did, for moving armies left a line of countless graves in their wake.

On our way we passed the battlefield of Chickamauga. The battle was fought in the autumn before and resulted in a severe defeat to our army there engaged. There is a certain gruesomeness about an old battlefield, not yet so old that nature has claimed her own and covered the scars. Trees and branches that were torn were still hanging, though shrivelled and dead, and there was still a stench of decaying flesh in the air.

Some of the slain had been buried, though it had been hastily and imperfectly done. Protruding shoes here and there showed the bones of the foot inside, the flesh having disappeared, and not infrequently a hand would be seen extended above the ground, with the

skin dried to the bones and weathered to the color of granite. The fingers would be curved as if beckoning, but in one instance I noted that the index finger was pointed upward. In one locality many hundreds had been left unburied, and the bones were peeping through the clothing. I picked up a skull which had a smooth, round hole through it; small it was, but yet large enough to let a life pass out.

Before night we came to the Chickamauga River, where its wine-colored water flows through dark woods, and there we went into camp. The name is said to be Indian, and signifies in their language, "River of Death."

Thus far we had come over old ground, but we had entered the "gateway," and were now well started on an aggressive campaign which was destined to take us into the very heart of the Confederacy, and in time clear through it. The roaring of cannon was heard in some direction every day, but between manœuvering, fighting, and night marching, the enemy was forced or flanked out of one position after another.

Does the unmilitary reader know what happens when a line of battle, or an army, is "flanked"? It was best described by a pris-

oner whom the pickets brought in one day. In the course of a little raillery and chaffing in conversation he was asked why their army kept falling back; why they did not stay and fight it out. His reply was, "You'ns swings roun' on our een's, like a gate." This, then, in some form, is what constitutes flanking.





CHAPTER XIII

BATTLE OF RESACA

Gruesome Preparations—Battle Scene like a Play Set on the Stage—Assault by Colonel (afterward President) Harrison—Our Regiment Engaged—Enemy Repulsed—Confederate Chaplain Slain, with his Sons—Removing the Wounded—Confederate Field Hospital—Bridge Building Hastened.

AT last, as we approached Resaca, we could hear the sound of musketry. Not the long roar of a regular engagement with its thundering of cannon for bass accompaniment, but a staccato solo as it were, in which there was an angry and defiant crackling of rifles along a skirmish line some two or three miles in length. We recognized that the two armies were again confronting each other, and that this time we were likely to be in it, in which expectation we were not disappointed.

In respect to this battle my Imp again refuses to furnish a continuous record, but

instead hands down a group of scenes, each unfaded in detail, but unconnected from the continuity of events.

At one place where we halted, a body of men were digging graves. Not seeing any dead near I inquired of one of their number what they were for, and was informed that as the ambulance corps had nothing to do just then, and a battle was expected, they were put to work digging graves—for men who had not yet gone into battle.

Late in the afternoon we were hurried at double-quick through glade and dell towards where there was firing. When our division arrived at the scene it was formed in line by brigades in such a manner that our brigade was not actually engaged, but was held in reserve on top of a ridge of ground from whence the brief engagement could be seen with the utmost distinctness. It was an attempt by the enemy to capture a battery at the left of our line, and thus be enabled to turn our flank, and for one slow-passing hour it seemed to be a crisis on which hung the fate of the battle. During this time the conflict was on an open plain in full view before us, and the whole scene could be watched as plainly as a play set on the stage.

Away to the left, just at the limit of the view from where we were, was the battery of six field-pieces, and they had been supported by a force which had been considered adequate. The ever-vigilant enemy, however, had discovered that this point was assailable, and waiting until just as night was settling down, thought to capture the battery and the position by a sudden onslaught, and then under cover of darkness throw our broken line into confusion.

It came near being a repetition of the defeat of our army at Chancellorsville, for their attack was at first entirely successful. When we came in view the troops which had been supporting the battery were scattered over the fields in complete defeat and confusion, and the enemy were resolutely assaulting the battery itself, firing as they advanced. With the artillerymen it was a question of how fast, with their decimated ranks, they could load and fire, the grape and canister tearing great gaps through the enemy's lines at each discharge. With the Confederate troops it was a question of whether they could bear this destruction until they should reach the guns, and either kill or capture the gunners.

The disposition of our force was made with

the utmost dispatch, and presently we saw, from the top of the ridge where we were, the Third Brigade step briskly out of the woods into full view. There was an instant's pause, and then the gathering dusk showed their volley in a sheet of flame and smoke springing from the line. The enemy were surprised. Our formation, being in the woods, had probably not been noticed by them, but they were not recruits to be panic-stricken by the unexpected, and unflinchingly they faced the new force.

Now the conflict became a test of nerve and endurance, and the lines settled down to their work, each man loading and firing as fast as he could, and the noise of the guns thickened into a long roar, accented by the deep bass of the cannon. It was a "stand up and take it" fight, for neither side had any cover. Steadily, steadily our line moved forward, still firing rapidly, and steadily the enemy held to their position. Would they come to bayonets? At last we saw the enemy's fire slacken and then cease, and through the smoke and gathering darkness we caught glimpses of them running back into the woods.

"Blow 'cease firing!'" The voice was that

of Gen. A. S. Williams,—“old Pop” Williams, as the boys affectionately referred to him among themselves,—and the order was addressed to the brigade bugler, Stevenson, who, as it happened, was a member of our regiment. Stevenson had been as intensely interested as the others in the drama before us, and he afterward told me that it was the only time he was ever ordered to blow “Cease firing.” Now, with the suddenness of the order he could not remember the signal, but he clapped the bugle to his lips and blew—something; and the firing ceased. The signal had not been needed, for the men saw that the enemy had retreated from their front, and they stopped firing without regard to that uncertain sound from Stevenson’s instrument.

The battery was saved and the day was saved. Once more the enemy had been foiled; but it was only a skirmish after all, and is scarcely mentioned in history; the battle was as yet hardly begun. It is very rarely that one is thus enabled to see plainly both sides in an engagement.

Another picture which the Imp has handed down is of the occurrences of the next day. There were open fields between our line and

the enemy's, and in the distance we could see a redoubt or fort of some kind on their line. Some distance to our right we saw a body of troops advance over the open space to assault this fort. It was the 70th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, under command of Colonel Benjamin Harrison, of whom my readers have since heard. He was the grandson of his grandfather, and like that eminent ancestor had an unstained military record, though it was by no means brilliant, but that day's undertaking was one of the things in which he did not succeed. After his regiment had suffered a severe loss they were compelled to abandon the attempt.

At one time, when we were being moved from one part of the field to another position, we passed a place where our troops had evidently been under fire, for there were a number of dead scattered about. Especially was this the case on a certain hillside covered with woods, and among them I noticed one who had fallen, and, apparently to keep himself from sliding down the steep slope, had seized a sapling with both hands. He was stretched at full length on his back, and with arms reaching above his head his hands still held to their grip on the tree. His face, with

the wide-open eyes, almost startled one at first, it had such an anxious and pained expression.

The battle was raging furiously now, and it was soon after the episode of Colonel Harrison's attack and repulse that our brigade became engaged on the extreme left. We were formed in line on a rise of ground in an open field, and threw up a slight defence by gathering and piling up the rails from a fence near at hand. Soon the long gray line was seen approaching, with good alignment and steady front. Upon coming within range they opened fire and continued to fire as they advanced, the bullets splintering the rails, and passing us with that peculiar, *zip-ping* sound so familiar to veterans. Immediately there was a crash close to my left,—the first gun always sounds so loud,—followed in quick succession by others until what had seemed at first but a successive clatter of explosions became one prolonged roar. The smoke soon became so thick that it was difficult for me to see the enemy's line except by glimpses and fragments.

In a few moments the fire lessened and finally ceased; the smoke cloud lifted and I could see plainly again. They were retreating

in disorder now, but scattered over the field were hundreds of their dead and wounded who could not retreat. The fire of our line had been very deadly and effective. We soon noticed by their movements that they were forming for a second attack. This was much like the first, but they were more persistent and got nearer to our line, though they were finally driven back before the storm of lead, and the dead and wounded in our front were thicker than ever. Just at the crisis the regiment at our right made a counter charge and captured a stand of the enemy's colors.

So severely did the enemy suffer in this assault on our line that Colonel Calhoun, who commanded the Confederate regiment in our front, afterward admitted to General Smith, then our Major, that his regiment never had a roll-call afterward.

A pathetic incident in connection with this attack was that among the Confederate dead which lay so thickly strewn before us was a family group; a gray-haired chaplain and his two sons.

As hostilities had ceased for the time at that part of the field, the task of removing the wounded to the rear commenced. There were no stretchers at hand, so we improvised

by using blankets and half-tents. When you start with a helpless man in a blanket he seems to weigh about a hundred pounds, but after you have gone a fraction of the distance you will think he weighs five hundred, and by the time you have carried your burden half a mile you will be ready to make affidavit to a weight in excess of anything on record; especially if part of the course, as it was in this case, happens to be in range of the enemy's fire.

We soon found where the surgeon had established himself in a hollow in the woods, and after we had brought all of our wounded to that place we set to work under his orders. Night found us tired and fasting, but with crackers and coffee and a few hours of sleep we felt restored; and when we awoke at dawn it was to find that the enemy had retreated from their position during the night.

In this retreat they had crossed the Oostenaula River, here a stream of considerable size, and as a matter of course they had destroyed the bridge. This necessitated the building of a new one, as for some reason the pontoon battalion was not on hand; for although a few men can be got across a river without much difficulty, the rapid crossing of

an army is quite another matter. There was a story told, which was current in the army at the time, about the building of this new structure.

It seems that the Chief of Engineers in this army was accustomed to more leisurely methods than could now be tolerated under the new commander. When the General asked him how much time would be required to make the new bridge, he replied that it would require two or three days. Upon this—so the story went—Sherman informed him that if it was not finished before night he could resign his position, as that army would have no further use for him.

It was said that the revelation in this imperative dictum of the newer element that had taken control gave such an impetus to the faculties of the Chief of Engineers that he surprised both himself and his commander by completing the bridge in even less than the limit of time assigned. I do not vouch for the truthfulness of the story, but I can vouch for the fact that we crossed the new bridge long before night on the day after the battle closed.

In leaving this battlefield we passed along much of the ground which had been occupied

by the enemy, and this inside view of the latter's position is always of more than passing interest. It furnishes a sort of "put-yourself-in-his-place" experience, by which we were enabled to take the same view which the Confederates had of our position, and also to compare our previous impressions of their position with the reality. I was especially interested in the redoubt which Colonel Harrison's attack had been directed against, for we found it to be a veritable stronghold in a position well selected for defence.

Soon after reaching this point we passed through what had been, on the day before, a Confederate field hospital. Of course it always happens in field hospitals that many of the wounded die, both before and after receiving the surgeon's attentions, and there were many of their dead here. One even lay stark and rigid on the surgeon's operating table, which seemed to indicate that the desertion of this place had been very hasty.

The surgeon's table in this case was not a folding and portable thing such as our surgeons used, but was a rough convenience made on the spot. Crotches had been set in the ground, with cross-pieces resting in them, on which were laid poles of even size long

enough for a table top. It was a rough affair at the best, but seemed to have answered the purpose. Our own army was none too well supplied with conveniences for the comfort of the wounded, but in the Confederate service there was a still greater deficiency, because they could not obtain them.

The turkey buzzards, with their sooty, dishevelled plumage and filthy beaks, were circling lower and lower over the field, but the Pioneer Corps were busy now burying the dead, both of the Blue and the Gray, while the wounded were being got away to the North. So these North American vultures would feast this time only on dead horses.

Youth and Hope go hand in hand and will not be depressed, and as we pushed on after the enemy we laughed and joked as before.





CHAPTER XIV

THE MYSTIC CHORDS OF MEMORY

Memories Revived by Old Letters—The Sanitary and Christian Commissions—"Uncle John" Vassar, the Army Missionary—Captain Cruger Wounded—The New Chaplain Wished to See a Battle—"Sherman's Method"—The Recruit and the General—Confederate Letter.

"THE mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living hearth and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Surely our good Lincoln had forgotten for the moment the immediate public when he penned these lines, and, writing to himself, wrote to an eternal public. It gave us a glimpse, too, underneath his rugged manhood

and heroic qualities of leadership, of a profound poetic imagination blended with prophetic foresight. Fortunate Lincoln! So soon himself to fill a patriot's grave! The assassin's bullet placed him forever secure in the temple of fame, and that nobler temple, the affections of his countrymen, before untoward circumstance or human frailty had robbed him of the right. That "chorus of the Union" has been rolling calmly on these many years, and the "better angels" were not inactive even then.

Those mystic chords of memory were stirred and quickened again when there was handed to me a letter which gave some account of the battle of Resaca. It was a letter written by a soldier boy to his sister, and the paper bore an imprint that reads like an enigma to the present generation. At the top of the sheet is a printed heading, a dove in flight, with a letter tied to its neck, and underneath this emblem are these words: "The U. S. Christian Commission sends this sheet as the soldier's message to his home. Let it haste to those that wait for tidings."

Doubtless some will read these lines, wondering who or what was this "Commission" which so strangely mingled the symbols of

peace with those of war. It was a voluntary organization which, co-operating with its sister organization the Sanitary Commission, and making the army chaplains their agents, kept in touch with the citizen soldiers.

Had the incidents of camp and field deprived them of the means to write a letter? The chaplain could supply them. Did scurvy break out and defy the medicine chest? The chaplain would soon receive a supply of pickles and other antidotes. Were there cold fingers on picket duty? See the chaplain, and perhaps some patriotic girl in the North had knit and contributed to the Commission barrel some woollen gloves. Was there idleness in camp? The seemingly inexhaustible Commissions had a supply of reading matter also.

And so all through the army these twin Commissions ministered to the well and to the sick, to the wounded and the dying. There were none more active in this service of love than the army missionary, John Vassar, who was a familiar figure to every one who served in the Army of the Potomac. "Uncle John," as he was familiarly known, was equally an adept at marching, nursing, and praying, and there are still many living who gratefully re-

member the mingled spiritual and bodily service rendered by him in their hours of need.

We may listen again to those mystic chords whose memories are surely now controlled by the better angels of our natures. We have long since learned that the conflict was not one of principalities and powers, but rather a conflict between the powers of great principles; a fierce struggle between two civilizations, in which the ancient and barbaric institution of race slavery, fighting for its life, at last went down. We now remember conditions and events as the product of institutions rather than as indicating the peculiarities of a people, for the two opposing forces were of one race. The well-known horrors of the Southern prison system, the dense ignorance and hatred of some of the Confederate prisoners with whom we came in contact, sometimes coupled with brutish malignity, were all the natural offspring of the peculiar institution.

In the previous chapter I gave some account of the battle of Resaca. Among those of our regiment who were there wounded was Captain S. Van Rensselaer Cruger, then Adjutant of the regiment. This is a name that will be recognized by New York readers, in

the circles of politics as well as of society. He fell to the ground a few feet from me, and I afterward assisted in carrying him to the field hospital, where his wounds were at first declared fatal. But his good constitution, strengthened by a pure life, enabled him to pleasantly disappoint the surgeons. His recovery from such severe wounds was the more remarkable, as most of the other wounded died, as I afterward learned, owing to the fact that scurvy had already infested the army, for nothing more surely destroys the healing power of the body than this insidious disease.

In the same brigade with my regiment was the 2d Massachusetts Infantry, and the chaplain of that regiment developed a rare ability of executive and leadership quality, which was recognized by the officer having charge of that medical department. Although it was not customary to give a chaplain any command, he gave this chaplain command and direction of the ambulance train of our brigade during this engagement, a sphere in which he proved very efficient.

It happened that in another regiment in our brigade was a new chaplain, who had just received his commission, and he came to

the Massachusetts chaplain with a strange request. He had never seen a battle, and simply asked that he might be assigned to a place at the front; some one must go there, and he desired to do his duty and at the same time gratify an almost feminine curiosity to know what a battle was like.

"Certainly," said the New Englander; "go with the stretcher bearers; your assistance will be needed there." And then, in a humor quite his own, he added a parting jest, "I can 'eat crow,' but I don't love the diet." As it happened, before night the new chaplain was himself borne to the rear on a stretcher, having been crippled by a shot through the leg. As he passed he called out to the Massachusetts chaplain, with the grim humor of an unruffled courage, "I say, Quint, I can 'eat crow,' too, but I have had enough." The comedy had a tragic ending, however, for the poor fellow died of his wound. Historians rarely give due credit to this devoted class of men, for records show that more than a hundred chaplains in our army lost their lives in battle during the war.

It was more than a dozen years later that I met our Massachusetts chaplain again, and I did not recognize him then. It was at a

city in his State, and the writer was a conspicuous party in a ceremony in which the obligations assumed are the most solemn a man can take upon himself. The chaplain, now grown gray and dignified, was the officiating clergyman. It was the late Dr. Alonzo H. Quint. But another dozen years had passed, and a friendship had sprung up between us, before we happened to learn that we had served and marched together, and during this battle, at least, had worked together among the wounded. The same talents and devotion which made his service so efficient in war yielded also the victories of peace, and he became known throughout all Congregationalism as the best of presiding officers and advisers, alike for men and churches.

Thus, as Past and Present touch finger-tips across the chasm of time we are saved from thinking that either is a dream, but realize that both are realities, and that when these events occurred it was "now" as much as it is at the present time.

I see that Grant, in his *Memoirs*, classes the action at Resaca as a skirmish, which, however, is incorrect, as the engagement was continuous and general for some time. Gen-

eral Grant was very busy in Virginia about that time and really knew very little about the details of our campaign. But it would, perhaps, convey a more correct impression to say that the whole four months' campaign from Chattanooga to Atlanta was almost a continuous battle, for not many days passed that some part of Sherman's army did not come in conflict with the enemy, and some of these actions were stubborn and prolonged.

The campaign was understood by every one in the ranks to have Atlanta as its objective point, but as to how the end was to be obtained there was much diversity of opinion. It was noticed, however, as the summer advanced, that this diversity vanished, and it was conceded by all that "Sherman's method" was in being always on the aggressive, and thus compelling the enemy to be continually on the defensive; and this was accomplished by persistent hard fighting and marching.

The Twentieth Corps held the only troops that served in both the East and West, and they probably had a more varied experience under different commanders than any other portion of our armies. They served under

the several commanders of the Army of the Potomac, then under Grant about Chattanooga, and under Sherman to the close of the war. I think it will be the universal testimony of the members of that corps that no general understood better than Sherman the art of marching an army, and no one was more ready to demand extreme exertion if the occasion required it. Yet I doubt if any commander had more the complete confidence and esteem of his men.

I have spoken of our laughing and joking, but it occurs to me that some may wonder what could possibly be found as an excuse for humor at such times and amid such scenes. Well, for that matter, almost anything will answer where the disposition and necessity are. After recruits began to be sent to the regiments they were as inexhaustible a source of joy to the veterans as are the proverbial Freshmen to the college Sophs. There was one who "guessed" the evening order to march at daylight would not be executed, because it "looked like rain." Imagine the roars of laughter from around that camp-fire. But the most enjoyed of all these involuntary entertainers was the one who wanted to get his boot mended.

Now it happened that that brigade was under the command of a Brigadier-General whom I will call General K. It was not at all to the discredit of this officer that he began life as a shoemaker, for he had risen to his then position by sheer ability, and was a most efficient officer, though somewhat quick tempered betimes.

Of course, when the recruit innocently inquired one night for the shoemaker he was promptly directed to the large tent on the hill, and the General's name was given as that of "the shoemaker of the brigade." The innocent was watched with much interest as he wended his way in that direction, boot in hand, and was finally seen to enter the brigade headquarters tent. The details of the brief interview within we were never able to fully glean, but the exit was hasty, and some observers averred that they had caught glimpses of a boot in the inquirer's rear, and even that the guard had to render him some assistance in getting disentangled from the tent ropes.

It sometimes happened as we followed the retreating army that we found letters and other things of interest which had been dropped or lost. It was always possible that

such things might contain matters of importance, hence every scrap of paper having writing on it was likely to be picked up and examined. I do not remember that I ever found anything of much value or assistance in the prosecution of the war, but some few things proved to be of passing interest.

Thus at Gettysburg I picked up a Confederate furlough which had been granted to "E. Williamson, G Company, 3d Reg., Ala. Vols." for twenty days from September 6, 1862, with transportation to Anderson, S. C., and back. It is signed in a bold hand, "By order Gen. Winder," and across the face it is endorsed by "D. H. Wood, Capt.," and "Jno. Johns, Lt. & A. A. C. S."

My "find" after the battle of Resaca did not furnish any autographs of historic personages like the one at Gettysburg. It was a letter dated at "Comberlan Gap," and was evidently from a Confederate soldier who had been home on a furlough, to his "Dear Cosin" in the Georgia army. Its delightful frankness and the quaintness of its expression were quite amusing, and I will give a paragraph, but without invading the sacredness of family secrets by disclosing the writer's name.

“ . . . in particular I would inform you that miss Joies is well and in the greatest capacities of sociabilities. she sang so sweet; she maid me Feel enchanted, with the lisp of Her sweet voice that are surtin To captivate, the most sincere Affections of one, that had been Struck with cupid's flying quiver, enough of that.”

The confusing metaphor employed here does not leave it quite clear what “that” was of which the writer indicates there was “enough.”





CHAPTER XV

THE BATTLE OF NEW HOPE CHURCH

Mind-Readers and Coming Events—Popular Misapprehensions—Battles are Fought by the Rank and File—Field Hospitals—Pathetic Scenes—Rebuilding—Advancing—Pursuing.

ONE pleasant day, a week or more after the battle of Resaca, we were approaching the vicinity of Dallas and crossed a brook called "Pumpkin Vine Creek." This pleasant-sounding bucolic title, however, has been deemed too prosaic to be inscribed on granite monuments erected to immortalize heroic regiments, and the battle which was fought here has been rechristened "New Hope Church." The Confederates were heavily intrenched in a strong position at this place, and it was assigned to the First and Second Divisions of our corps (ours was the First) to attempt its capture. The attempt

was a failure at that time, and resulted in a heavy loss to us.

Our division was commanded then by Brigadier-General A. S. Williams, the same that I have already referred to as "Pop" Williams. He was a most efficient officer, and in the Savannah campaign which followed was promoted to Major-General, and commanded the Twentieth Corps.

Now, a general must have his own plans and keep his own counsel, but his daily life is open to the vision of an army, for he lives in "that fierce light which beats upon the throne." It was not strange then that the men in the ranks were in the habit of making a shrewd study of the faces of those who were supposed to know of intended movements and plans for battle. No doubt the generals knew this and tried to cultivate a good bearing at critical times. I remember that when our brigade was at Gettysburg it was at one time waiting idly, but in a position where shells came uncomfortably near us. There was some uneasiness manifested among the men until General Lockwood seated himself quietly on a stump in a conspicuous place, and immediately became absorbed in a newspaper which he took out of his pocket.

If "Pop" Williams ever had any emotions, he took good care not to let them show in his face, for through all times and places it wore an expression of impenetrable good nature which was a closed book to the would-be mind-readers. But there was one thing which he failed to mask, and that was the cigar which was carried in his mouth most of the time. Was it lighted and emitting a cheerful cloud of smoke? All would be quiet for the day. Had it been allowed to go out, while the end was being violently chewed? Then plans were maturing and some new movement was on foot. But when it was frequently shifted from side to side in his mouth and kept rolling over and over between the lips, "like a log in the peeler," as the paper-pulp man said, then there would surely be a fight before dark.

This battle near New Hope Church was a surprise to many, for it opened with the suddenness of a cyclone descending from a clear sky, without the usual prelude of skirmish firing. But those mind-readers who had carefully noted his cigar that morning as the General rode past with his staff said that it had not been lighted at all, but was rolling between his lips with unusual vigor.

In my experience of this battle I saw far more of its wreckage than I saw of its action, for the small portion of the conflict that I actually witnessed was in dense woods, and I was soon busily engaged with others in carrying the wounded to the rear.

I trust that no young reader has the idea that I had when a boy. I thought that in battle the bands and drum corps marched ahead of the soldiers and played sweet music to drown the groans of the dying and cheer the living on to victory and glory. Had I not seen more than one brave picture of our revered ancestral patriots being led to the fray in that poetic manner?

But in real service I never heard a note of music during a battle. Occasionally the piercing sounds of a bugle would be heard, for in some parts of the army orders are given by certain understood signals on the bugle. The notes of this instrument have such a penetrating and far-reaching quality that it can be heard when, in the din of battle, the voice would reach but a short distance. We were called upon to issue liberal "music rations," from time to time, especially in the camps; but battles are very prosaic affairs, and the General's ideas about musicians'

duties at such times were entirely utilitarian, for we were invariably detailed to assist in some capacity about the wounded.

Another popular misconception about the conduct of battles is that a general "leads" a charge by riding ahead of his line and shouting "Follow me!" This, perhaps, is not strange, for who ever saw a newspaper account of that date which did not describe a brilliant charge in about that way? As a matter of fact, when a line of battle is formed, the officers' place is not in front, but in the rear of the line; for it must be kept constantly in mind, whatever eulogistic biographers may say to the contrary, that battles are not fought by the officers, for they only direct the fighting. The battle is fought by the rank and file. Officers must, of course, be where they can both receive and give orders, and this could not be done if they were in front of their own line, and as a general rule the higher the rank of the officer the farther to the rear, from very necessity, his position must be.

As soon as possible after a battle has begun the surgeons establish themselves in a favorable position near at hand, and, having the wounded brought there, give them imme-

ciate attention. This is called a field hospital, and the operations and dressings which they received there were likely to be the last they would have from surgeons until they reached a permanent hospital in the North, perhaps a week or more afterward.

At New Hope Church the field hospital was promptly located in a stately pine forest, where the ground was so thickly covered with pine needles that the tramp of armies and the rumble of wagons was rendered almost noiseless. The position was also protected by a little rise of ground from wandering projectiles that might come from the line of hostilities in our front. Numerous large tents were erected to shelter the wounded from the pouring rain which soon set in. The rain ceased next day, but as the battle continued the tents were filled and many long rows of the wounded were laid under the trees.

I remained at this field hospital about a week. Part of my time was spent in assisting the surgeons at the operating table, and much of the nights were filled in the care of the wounded. Even now my Imp crowds the memory with the pictures of that week: of the enemy's night attacks, with their shrieking accompaniment of the "Rebel yell,"

followed by the roar of musketry and the strong cheers in deep chest tones from our line when the attack was repulsed; of the agony of some of my patients who died of lockjaw; of the freshly wounded continually brought in. The surgeons would make a preliminary examination as soon as possible to determine the general character of the wound, and, possibly giving a few instructions, would pass on.

Here, for instance, is a man in the prime of early manhood stretched on the ground in evident distress. The surgeon opens his coat and shirt in front, and turning them back reveals the wound, a bullet hole in the right breast. Its centre, as large as the thumb nail, is a clot which sinks deep in with each respiration and then bulges out. It is circled round with its fringe of destroyed tissue, black at its inner edge and shading away through successive purple, leaden, and ashen tints to the alabaster whiteness of the skin.

Each labored breath, staining the tawny mustache with its crimson tide, tells me, even before the doctor has given the word,—“Done for; that shot through the lungs will use him up before morning,”—that the case is hopeless and before another day has

dawned the gasping struggle for breath will have ceased. Thenceforth he will receive no further attention, except that the nurses will frequently give him water.

Attendants in field hospitals witness many such pathetic scenes, different from those in general hospitals where lingering sickness and emaciated forms are always present. But here are sun-burned men, suddenly stricken in their full vigor; here are the freshly torn muscles and dripping blood, and tragic death scenes.

I remember a fine-looking young fellow, hardly twenty-one, who was mortally wounded. His frequent request was for water, and finally, seeing that he could last but a few moments, I knelt by his side and at frequent intervals put a little in his mouth with a spoon. Finally his parched lips could not open to speak the word or receive the water even, but the pleading look came into his eyes, and, understanding it, I dipped my finger in the water and moistened his lips. To my surprise they parted in a pleasant smile. I glanced quickly to his eyes, but saw that I was looking at the half-closed windows of an empty tenement; that smile had spanned two shores.

At another time there was a strong man of, perhaps, twenty-five, who sat on the ground. One hand rested on the ground and the other on his thigh, while his head drooped forward. If you would see his exact counterpart look at the *Dying Gladiator*. The sculptor of that ancient statue must have seen something besides professional *poseurs*. The modern gladiator called frequently for the doctor, and an attendant, pointing him out, spoke to the surgeon, but the latter said that he had examined the case and could do nothing for him, as he was bleeding to death internally. The nurse returned, and, kneeling by his side, spoke in a low tone to the dying man; then took out a pocket memorandum and began to pencil down a last message to distant friends. But as many fresh wounded were being brought in just then, and help was scarce, the surgeon called him.

He sprang to his feet and left the dying soldier—alone; for his regiment was at the front, and among the many within sound of his voice he was an entire stranger. He occasionally raised his head and spoke weakly, but no one had time to give him any further attention. I noticed after a little that the palor of death had spread over his face. Then

he settled lower and lower, and finally sank on the ground; there was a gurgling sound, followed by a convulsive motion of the limbs, which lasted a few moments and then ceased.

These are some of the minor incidents connected with a battle, and from their very commonness passed almost unnoticed in the great procession of events. But they are samples of thousands of experiences that fall to the lot of attendants in field hospitals, and may serve to illustrate the shaded background to the brilliant feats of arms which the front of battle affords.

Even in this carnival of tragedy something humorous or droll would sometimes happen to relieve the monotony of suffering. There was one young fellow whose face showed a bullet hole not far from the nose, but no place of exit could be found and it was concluded that the bullet must have remained somewhere within, but we could not guess where. While sitting there he was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and presently coughed the bullet out of his throat, catching it in his hand as it fell. Winking at the nurse he quietly slipped it in his pocket, remarking as he did so, "I guess I'll save that as a souvenir."

This army of a hundred thousand men (and no one knows how many horses and mules) had to be supplied with food and ammunition over a single-tracked railroad from Nashville. This road the enemy destroyed as they retreated and our army rebuilt as they advanced; hence there was often delay in getting transportation to the North for the wounded. The railroad had now been rebuilt to Kingston, thirty miles in our rear, and day after day the ambulances received their loads of suffering humanity to carry them back to this point, where they were loaded on the cars to be sent North. At the end of a week they were able to take the last of the wounded who were still living, and I was one of the number detailed to take care of them on the way.

The enemy had finally been routed from about Dallas, and the field hospital at that place was broken up. As we left the now nearly deserted woods, almost the last sight that met my eyes was the abandoned surgeons' quarters, and near at hand a considerable pile of legs and arms that their rightful owners never saw again.



CHAPTER XVI

FROM FIELD TO HOSPITAL

With the Ambulances—Caring for the Wounded on the Way—Hardships for the Sick—Temporary Stopping-Place Becomes an All-Summer's Hospital.

THIS ending of the operations about Dallas marked a distinct change in my service. I expected to be absent from the regiment but two days at the most, but by the fortunes of war I did not see it again for three months,—not until after the capture of Atlanta.

The ambulances with Sherman's army were plain, two-horse spring wagons, having canvas tops to protect the inmates from sun and rain. The driver was perched on a seat in front, but the interior was entered from the rear. Along each side ran a seat the whole length, on which the patients could sit, and arranged in this way it would accommodate

eight or more of those who had not been wounded in such a way as to make it imperative that they should lie down in being carried. It might at first be thought that the loss of a hand or arm would not prevent a man from walking a limited distance, as long as his legs were not injured. But the loss of blood, the pain and nervous shock attending it all, make the patient too weak to walk much, and should it be attempted it would prove fatal in a majority of cases.

But for those severe cases in which it was necessary that the patients should be carried in a horizontal position, there was an arrangement by which the whole interior was made into one plain surface on which the patients could lie. Fixed in this way, two, or even three, could be accommodated, though the latter number made them packed too close for comfort.

On the outer side of each vehicle hung a stretcher. The army stretcher was a very simple but useful contrivance. It was composed of two strong side-pieces, and these were connected at a suitable distance apart by cross-pieces, the intervening space being covered with canvas. The side-pieces were long enough so that the ends could be used

as handles, and two men could thus carry a helpless patient very well.

There was a guard of armed men who accompanied us too, for even in the rear of our army, in the country we had just passed over, there was liable at any time to be wandering bands of the enemy's scouts and cavalry, looking for a chance to surprise and capture stores.

I think a large proportion of this last lot of patients were those most severely wounded, for of those who came under my care very few could get into the ambulances alone. With much tugging and lifting we got them in as well as we could, though there were many groans and now and then an involuntary scream of pain. The forenoon was well advanced when all was ready and the long line of ambulances started up the road.

For the wounded men this long ride over roads which the passage of two armies had left in a terribly rough condition was one prolonged torture which made the heart ache. It was intensified, too, by the dust and sultry heat, and the odor of festering wounds attracted swarms of flies, so that before night the wounds became infested by maggots.

There have been reckless statements to the

effect that army surgeons were hasty and unfeeling in their treatment of wounded men, but I am sure such statements are without foundation. Depraved, indeed, must be the person, professional or layman, who could be rough or unfeeling to such patients. As far as my experience went I never saw them give any but the most kindly, considerate, and careful attention to those under their charge.

We filled our canteens at every stream, for every time the ambulances halted for a few moments every man wanted water to drink. We wet cloths and laid on fevered brows, and poured water on the dressings covering the wounds. "Water, more water," was the constant call. The doctors went from one ambulance to another along the line, giving such relief as they could, sometimes an opiate to relieve extreme pain, and sometimes a little whisky to prop up the sinking vitality.

The dinner halt was a short one and we did not attempt to take the patients out, but hastily building a fire made some coffee, and gave them coffee and crackers where they were. This and the brief rest seemed to give them some relief, and we soon started on again. It was not until after dark that we finally halted at a plantation³ house, with its sur-

rounding group of outbuildings, for the night, and now we laboriously lifted out our charges and did what we could to make them comfortable.

We grouped them about the fires on the lawn, and where there were not blankets enough two could be laid close together and one blanket made to cover them both. Then we prepared a supper for them and for ourselves of fried pork, with coffee and hard-tack. The guard put out their pickets about the camp, and when all was done that could be done I crept under a shed, and, softly laying my head on a little pile of cotton, thought how pleasant it was to rest, when just then (so it seemed) there was a long, shrill blast of the bugle.

"There must be a night attack," was my first thought. I sprang to my feet and ran to the picket reserve, who were sitting about a fire some little distance away and looking strangely unconcerned.

"What call is that?" I asked.

"Reveille," replied the sergeant, looking up as if he thought I must be a recruit who did n't know the "calls." The long-drawn notes *did* have a familiar sound. But reveille in the evening! I reflected a moment.

“What time is it?”

“Three o’clock.”

I had slept several hours without knowing that I had been asleep. We were called thus early to complete the journey in the cool of the day. We arrived at Kingston without accident, and here a surprise awaited us. A raiding party of the enemy’s cavalry had cut the railroad and there was no communication with the North. The ambulances, however, must return to the army, and we must do something with our patients. So we took possession of some great barn-like buildings that had been erected in a piece of woods,—for Confederate hospitals it was said,—and carrying in our wounded we laid them in two long rows on the floor of each building, some with a blanket and some with nothing to soften the planks.

Of those who had been cared for by myself and the two drummer boys that assisted me, not one had died on the way, though there were deaths in some of the other ambulances.

Now the surgeons and all had plenty of work to do. The medical stores and food supplies—such as they had in this unexpected turn of affairs—had to be got out and carried into the buildings, and the necessary things

for the immediate relief of the patients must be opened and got ready. Then we made haste to attend to the wounds, for the maggots, which had got into them on the day before, had been gnawing, gnawing the flesh all night. In most cases it was necessary after removing the dressings to also cut the stitches and again open the gaping space which had been closed up after an amputation or other operation; and even then, in the case of deep wounds, we were not sure of getting them all out, and would have to pour liquid into the place from a bottle labelled "whisky and chloroform." This would bring them wriggling out, "on a canter," as one of the boys said, but the sensation to the patient was about the same as it would have been had we poured boiling water in the wound.

It must be remembered that this was before the days of antiseptics, which prove such a perfect barrier at the present time against not only maggots, but also against invisible disease germs of all kinds that made such havoc with the wounded in the Civil War.

Night came again all too soon, for we were without candles, and what was done must be done while the day lasted. My drummer boys had gone back with the ambulances, and

Dr. Connelly said there was no one to watch in Ward 4 but myself. So I prepared for the night by filling at the spring what canteens I could find among the men, and supplying myself with matches. If any one called me in the night I could find him by striking a match, and it was not likely that I could do anything but get water for drinking or for wetting the fevered wounds. But where should I stay during the tedious hours?

The long, silent room was already losing its boundaries in the gathering darkness, and there was not a single article of furniture; only the floor and the four walls rising twenty feet to the roof. I could lie on the floor, but I knew that if I did so I should instantly drop asleep. I could keep awake by walking the floor, but that would disturb the sick. Here I have it! I found, out-of-doors, a small box, and placing it in the middle of the room, seated myself bolt upright upon it, sure now that I could rest my feet and still keep awake.

As the last gleams of daylight disappeared the room became blank darkness, and not a sound could be heard except the heavy breathing of the men. Hark! Was that a distant gun on the picket line? No, one of

the men had moved and something had dropped to the floor. All was silent out-of-doors, and I must have been dozing. Where were the ambulances by this time? Had they reached the army yet? I had been placed under the surgeon's orders and had obeyed them in remaining, but what would Colonel Ketcham say when he learned that I had not returned? Would he—there was a pain in my head, and putting my hand to my ear I found it wet with blood. I was lying at full length on the floor.

“Got to sleep and fell off, did n't ye?” said a kindly voice near. “It's tu bad; ye better lay down here and I'll wake ye up if anybody wants ye.”

Bless his generous heart! After all he had suffered and was suffering, and then to think that he had compassion to spare for a sleepy boy! But I was on my mettle now. I was determined that I would keep awake for the remainder of the night, and I did. But from darkness to daylight not one of my patients called for anything. The long ride had made them crave for rest more than for anything else.

That which was intended as a temporary stopping-place became thenceforth an all-

summer's hospital, designated in army phrase as a "receiving hospital." In due time we received supplies of all kinds and—crowning glory of all!—there came a woman who took charge of the special diet. During the summer we were continually receiving fresh wounded from the front, and sending those that had become more comfortable to the North.

Whatever experience at the front I may have missed was—partially, at least—compensated for by my experience in several field hospitals, as well as in this receiving hospital, and such experience cannot fail of having a value and interest. For one thing, it is a pleasanter thought in the declining years, that of having relieved pain, instead of the other thought, that of having caused pain and death. In saying this I do not for a moment overlook the fact that we were but seconding the efforts of those at the front, and were as much responsible as they for the legitimate acts of the war. Still, in the long after-years, the thought of having relieved pain is pleasanter than the thought of having inflicted it.

This was before the days of trained nurses, even for the wealthy at home, and the army

was obliged to make shift and use such material as it could succeed in getting from the ranks. To become accustomed to hospital scenes is sometimes an experience in itself. I well remember my first sight of an operation, which was at Gettysburg. A thigh amputation was in process at the time, and at first sight of the quivering, severed muscles, and the bone laid bare for the saw, there swept over me such a sudden impulse to turn and leave the place that only by an effort of the will did I remain at my post. But from that time, save for the universal pity we all have for those who suffer, the sight of or participation in operations did not affect my nerves or give me any discomfort.

Without technical knowledge I yet acquired a certain readiness in assisting in the ordinary details of surgery which must have been somewhat appreciated by the surgeons, for I was generally required to assist when such work was to be done. But for that matter there was so much to be done that they were obliged to make use of a great deal of unskilled labor. I have probably assisted at more surgical operations than the ordinary surgeon sees in a lifetime.



CHAPTER XVII

HOSPITAL EXPERIENCES

Peculiarities of the Patients—One who Lost Half his Blood and All his Conceit—Gratitude of the Wounded—High Rate of Mortality—Theory and Practice in Medicine—Confederate Patients.

THIS hospital at Kingston, Ga., though established by accident as it were, became a valuable adjunct to the army, and, as its supplies came forward and the details were perfected, we settled into a routine of daily life. Gradually its capacity was increased by the erection of a number of very large tents, and it is probable that there were, at one time, nearly or quite a thousand wounded men there.

The ward for the care of which I was responsible had forty cots for patients, and I soon had charge of the medicines and surgical dressings of forty cripples. There is a good

deal of human nature everywhere in the world, but nowhere is it found more manifest than in a hospital, where all are helpless and dependent. Under incompetent management they become a tyrannical family of spoiled children, while under wise supervision they readily follow directions and hold to a degree of order and cheerfulness which is worth more in its general effects than the doctor's medicines.

The Ward Master who was kind, cheerful, and just to all, and at the same time filled the room with a prevailing spirit of good cheer and fraternal feeling, was the one of value, however little he might know of nursing. The ward that had beside this a few good story-tellers, or those of a witty and humorous turn among the nurses and patients, was indeed blessed.

There were always a few selfish patients, seemingly entirely devoid of generous or moral impulses, and they were not usually of the most severely injured either. They were utterly regardless of the comfort of others and eager to be served first and best, whether the service was of food or attention. It sometimes required firmness and care to get along with such moral monstrosities;

firmness to resist their bullying demands, and care to prevent being outwitted by their cunning deceptions.

I remember one instance in which I was finally obliged to quietly bring the aggressor face to face with the ultimatum of physical force, and then his collapse from cowardly bravado was so sudden that it was ludicrous, and a wholesome ripple of laughter went around the room.

There was another class of patients who were as much in the minority as those just mentioned. Among so many there were sure to be a few whose conceit was proof against reasoning and advice, and they earned the sobriquet of "Knowing Ones." There was one patient brought to our ward who was so striking an instance of this class that he may fairly be taken as a type. Aside from this trait, though, he was a first-rate fellow, warm-hearted and impulsive, and generous to a fault. He had been crippled by a bullet which had passed through his leg in some mysterious course, entering below the knee and coming out on the other side down near the ankle.

He was repeatedly warned by the surgeon to remain in bed in a horizontal position, as

the wound was liable to break out bleeding at any time. But he was not of the kind who are fond of accepting statements on faith, and one day, not long after his arrival, he "guessed" that he knew "as much about that wound as the doctor" did. So he tried sitting up on the cot; then put his feet to the floor,—rather timidly at first, but finding no discomfort, finally limped about the room, in defiance of my protests and with great delight in his own independence.

On the night following, soon after midnight, I was suddenly called by the night nurse. Springing to my feet I ran to the Knowing One's cot to find it being saturated with his blood at a rate that would have cost his life in a few minutes more. I made a rush for bandage and compresses, which were always on my table, and in a short time had stopped the life stream. The next day there was a council of surgeons, an operation lasting two hours, and a very sick patient who had lost half his blood and all his conceit. But as he was steadily improving when he was sent North a few weeks later, it is probable that in time both were restored to their normal condition of surplus.

But over against the selfish, the knowing,

the rebellious, and the worrying ones, there was the plain and manly remainder, always greatly in the majority, who were reasonable in their expectations, and so very appreciative of the service we were rendering as our daily duty, and which surely none could have withheld, even without that incentive. Nor were they slow to express their appreciation. Richer than any may know were the rewards of this kind that came to me, not only then, but months and even years after, when some chance meeting of an acquaintance with one of my former patients would bring me a message which would show how gratefully we were still remembered.

It was some months after that, when on our march to the sea, that my tent-mate, Frank Green, came straggling into camp one night a little late. He had been away from the regiment, foraging on his own account, that day. Almost the first words he said were, "Do you remember Willson, of the — Ohio?"

"Yes, I took care of him in Kingston; but what do you know about him?"

Then he told me of his experience. Returning from his foraging expedition he had fallen in with a member of an Ohio regiment

which was in another division, and he proved to be one of my patients. Learning what regiment Frank belonged to he suddenly exclaimed, "Do you know Charlie Benton? He belonged in that regiment."

"Yes," said Frank, "I tent with him."

"How *is* Charlie?" was the next question.

"Charlie's doing well," replied Frank, somewhat amused by the lively interest displayed by his new acquaintance.

"I hope he will always do well. Give him my 'best,' will you? I should n't be alive to-day if he had n't taken care of me."

With this hearty remembrance they parted, and the message was surely more than compensation for all that I ever did for him, for it showed that my efforts had been appreciated at least.

The circumstance recalled an incident of Willson's stay at the Kingston hospital. He was wounded in the thick part of the thigh, and the minie ball, as large as the end of one's thumb, was still in there. Soon after his arrival the surgeons concluded to look for that bullet. He was put to sleep in the usual way by the use of chloroform, and the operation, though pretty long, was finally successful. As he was coming out from

under the influence of the anæsthetic, but while his eyes were still closed, he began to talk, like one talking in his sleep. His remarks were mostly about the doctors who were present, and as they were witty and sarcastic, and one after another came in for his share of the cuts, every one in the ward roared with laughter, and the doctors themselves had to join in it.

Finally one of them gave him a little whisky to rouse him to full consciousness. After a time he opened his eyes slowly, and, looking steadfastly a moment at the surgeon who was bending over him, solemnly said, "We've had a great drunk, have n't we, doctor?" It was a long time before he could understand what we were laughing at. He gained rapidly after that day, and I think the incident materially improved the general health of the ward.

Deaths were frequent, as may be supposed, for, as I have said, none of the modern appliances for the protection of surgical operations from disease germs were then known to science, and the dead were buried daily without ceremony.

Nor was the theory and practice of medicine always the same with different doctors.

There was one—a German doctor—who had great faith in whisky. If our prohibition friends could have access to the prescription books of that hospital I have no doubt they would find therein a strong argument for their cause. The hospital steward, who put up all the prescriptions, told me in conversation on the subject that that doctor's book was "full of gravestones," referring to the entry of death opposite the patient's name in the prescription book.

The wards of our hospital were like the ranks of the army, in that they included all grades of life,—the rich and the poor, the ignorant and the cultivated,—for it was a war that laid such strong hold upon feeling and sentiment that social considerations were sunk for the time being. There were many who did not see why education or wealth, which happened to be theirs, should debar them from carrying a rifle in the ranks—"for the cause." The native Americans who could not read were scarcer with us than college men.

Among other kinds of patients we had at one time a few prisoners who were too severely wounded to be placed in the prison with the others. They were our enemies, but

now they were crippled and helpless, and to the honor of our boys be it recorded that not once during their stay among our patients were they addressed in any language but that of kindness. There seemed to be, instead, a certain chivalrous feeling, hardly to have been expected when all the circumstances were taken into account, which forbade insult to a fallen foe. Most of them were quite non-communicative, but one was very free to express his surprise and gratitude at the treatment they received.

I learned that none of them could read or write, but it must not be supposed that this lack of knowledge of books indicated a corresponding degradation or inferior intelligence, as it would at the North. The conditions prevailing in the South lowered the public-school system, and it was in some localities impossible for the children of even well-to-do families to have any teaching whatever unless a private teacher was employed. One of our unlettered Southerners especially seemed to be a gentleman, in the best meaning of the word, but he died before I had an opportunity to get acquainted with him.



CHAPTER XVIII

HOSPITAL EXPERIENCES (CONTINUED)

A Day's Duties—Curious Wounds—A Cheerful Patient
—Commonness of Death—Walt Whitman's Hos-
pital Pictures—A Berrying Excursion—Murders
by Guerillas—Return to the Regiment.

LET the reader accompany me through the round of a day of hospital duties. Our ward held forty patients, and there were, beside myself, upon whom all vocations were apt to fall by turns, two nurses, one or both of whom were on duty at all hours, day and night. If the one on duty during the night needed assistance I was called, and it sometimes happened that a critical case demanded my care all night. But I usually arose at daylight and began preparing my family for breakfast. Water was brought from a spring a short distance away, and with basins and towels we made the rounds.

It frequently happened that a cot held the silent form of one who, in the slow ebbing of vitality, had entered the night with insufficient to tide him over the fatal hours from 1 to 3 A.M. The blanket had been drawn up over the face, and as soon as possible the burial squad would call to carry the remains away, for with human nature just as it is, the presence of a corpse among patients is not an inspiring source of cheerfulness.

When all were ready, the nurses went to the kitchen, a shed building some distance away, for the breakfast. The food, as I remember it, was not what would now be called hospital fare. It was principally hard-tack and salt meat, with coffee and a little sugar, and sometimes rice or beans were added for variety. Special diet, for severe cases, had a few added delicacies from the stores of the Sanitary Commission: condensed milk and a few vegetables and pickles,—the latter being especially in demand just then, for scurvy had gotten a strong foothold already and was making its dreaded presence felt, and pickles were its quickest and surest antidote. I have seen raw potatoes and onions packed in vinegar as eagerly sought and devoured by the men in the ranks of the

army as are chocolate drops by a group of schoolgirls.

Just at this time, and later, the Sanitary and Christian Commissions had great difficulty in getting transportation to Sherman's army for any of their stores. The railroad was burdened to supply the army with necessities and had small room for luxuries.

After breakfast was finished each patient's cup was washed and hung on the wall over his head, the tin plates were returned to the kitchen, and we then bestirred ourselves to put the room in order for the day. I then began my special labor of dressing the wounds, having packages of lint, bandages, etc., water and towels, and a great sheet of adhesive plaster hanging on the wall to cut strips from as they were needed. If there was a difficult case it was left until the surgeon came in, which would be during the forenoon. This work was usually finished before dinner time.

After dinner the report was made out for the day, and the prescription book was taken to the dispensary, where the prescriptions were filled. There was occasionally a little time then to write letters, and sometimes to write letters for the sick, and before night

some of the most severe wounds would need a second dressing. But there were often surgical operations to be attended to, or a number must be got away to the North and a fresh lot of wounded from the front were to be installed in their places.

So between the regular duties and the occasional and extra duties we were usually kept pretty busy until dark. Then a single tallow candle was lighted in one corner of the long building, and as it scarce penetrated the gloom at all, silence would soon prevail and sleep for those to whom it was not denied.

Of the curiosities among wounds there was one patient who had been hit by a minie ball that had entered back of his right ear and found exit just under the left eye, making a hole as large as one's finger. Yet the man, when he left us, seemed to be in a way to fully recover.

Probably it would puzzle even an expert to guess what position a man could be in to get hit seven times by one bullet. That, however, is what had happened to one whom I cared for, and the way he explained it was this: he had raised his rifle to fire when a bullet from the enemy hit one wrist, all four fingers of the other hand, cut a notch in

his chin (as his head was bent forward), and lodged in his breast, where it remained. As it had not been extracted when he left us, the outcome seemed to be in doubt.

There was a jolly, broad-shouldered German, whose cheerfulness was unfailing, though he had lost both his legs by a shell which had burst between his feet. His morning joke and rippling laughter echoing down the great building was a benediction of life and health-giving to the wan faces. During his whole stay he avowed his intention to begin with me the study of German just as soon as I could spare an hour a day for the purpose. That was also probably one of his jokes, for, as he well knew would be the case, the spare hour never materialized, and, though he made a great pretence every day of opening his school with one pupil, we never got beyond the morning salutation and a few phrases.

Among them all there was one who, perhaps, attracted me the most strongly, not only on account of the severity of his wound, but also by his youth and purity. He was a beardless boy, with flaxen hair and sky-blue eyes, and a bullet had made an ugly hole through the thick part of his thigh,

dangerously near the large artery. The doctor said it should heal readily, but as day by day it gave indications of growing larger instead, he looked grave and made no comments. One morning, as I was dressing it, there floated out with the discharge a piece of blue cloth. Here, then, was the secret of its failing to heal; the bullet had torn and dragged into the tissue a piece of the clothing and had left it there.

From that time the thin cheeks, whose fairness had become marble-like in its whiteness, began to recover a little tinge of color, and when a few weeks later I carried him out to the ambulance, and then at the depot took him from the ambulance in my arms, and, carrying him into the car, laid him in the berth to begin his journey to the North, he had a good prospect of recovery. His arms clung about my neck and seemed reluctant to unwind, even after he was laid in his berth, and when I finally bade him good-by, I confess there was a tug at my heart-strings as the azure eyes looked up, suspiciously moist.

How easy it would have been to have preserved his home address, and that of hundreds of others as well, and how often I have since wished that I had done so; and it seems

strange now that I did not. But life in the army in war time takes no thought for the morrow. That element of planning for the future, which fills so large a space in our home life, found little encouragement there. "After the war" we were accustomed to look forward to as a tangible certainty which must sometime come, but its apparent remoteness gave a kind of intangibility to the thought after all, for the specific date no one attempted to fix even approximately. It would be soon enough to plan for that time when it should come.

For the present we lived in the "now," each one vaguely conscious that he was a cog in a vast machine whose movements he could not fully know, and in the direction of which he took no part. This feeling was probably intensified by the commonness of death. At home, no matter how watchful we may be, death always brings with it some element of surprise, but never in the army; there it is always expected and is always happening.

As I write of these events scenes and faces rise before me with a vividness that stimulates my pen, and I must hold it in check or the reader's patience will be exhausted. In after years, when I read Walt Whitman's

account of his experiences in army hospitals, these memory-pictures gave me the feeling that I could understand at least one phase of his character, that best revealed in his own unmetred lines:

“I sit by the restless all the dark night; some are
so young,
Some suffer so much: I recall the experience
sweet and sad.
Many a soldier’s loving arms about this neck
have crossed and rested,
Many a soldier’s kiss dwells on these bearded
lips.”

Dear old Walt! He was much belabored because he would write as he would. Yet all his roughness was in his pen, for personally he was the gentlest and kindest of men, and at work in and about army hospitals he was at his best and in his element of usefulness. It was here, too, that he received that close touch of humanity so dear to his heart, while, in their turn, it is said the wounded and sick soldiers became much attached to him.

There was not lacking evidence that we were surrounded by enemies, even though in the rear of our own army. We were in a country where nearly every white resident,

male or female, was an enemy and ready to act as one, either as "bushwhacker" or spy, as opportunity might offer. There were also raiding bands of Confederate cavalry constantly looking for opportunities to capture supplies or destroy railroad bridges, and otherwise hamper and interrupt the supply of our army in front. I doubt if they would have cared to capture a thousand or more cripples; that would have been a bootless victory, but perhaps they would have taken some chances in hopes of capturing the large store of medicine and surgeon's equipments that must have been here. Some arms were kept on hand, and when the scouts brought an alarm every one who could move about was expected to be ready to assist in defence.

I obtained leave of absence one day to go huckleberrying. I was careful to take a rifle, and keep clear of the houses and roads, and probably went two miles into the country. Once I heard voices approaching, and lying down in the bushes remained concealed until they had passed. Berries were plentiful, and the afternoon outing made a pleasant change for me, as well as for my patients, to whom I brought the berries; yet it was really not worth the risk, for a few of the men who

went out the next day were fired upon from ambush and two of their number killed. The ambulance went out with a guard afterward and brought in the bodies. As there was not known to be any Confederate force in the vicinity at the time, they were probably assassinated by residents.

During the three months of my stay at Kingston our comrades at the front were passing through the various battles that finally resulted in the capture of Atlanta, and when, on September 2d, that city fell into Sherman's hands, orders soon came to break up our hospital. Carefully carrying our helpless ones into the cars we found provided, we saw them speed away to the North. Then after a little waiting we boarded a south-bound train to report to our various regiments.

It seems singular, but of the hundreds of men that I knew first and last at Kingston hospital, surgeons, nurses, and patients, to the best of my recollection I have never met one of them since, either in the army or out of it, though I have several times received messages of good cheer through friends and acquaintances who had met some of them.



CHAPTER XIX

ATLANTA

Sketch of City Mansion—Death of a Member of the Band—Mystery and Adventure of his Life—A Foraging Tour—Voting for President—Amusements of an Army—Amateur Theatrical Company.

AS was the case with the immortal Tommy, Frank Green and "Art for Art's sake" were out looking for each other one day. Frank was armed with pencil and a sheet of unruled writing paper, and the result of their encounter is a rather amateurish sketch now hanging in my study, which I value at a higher price than any picture dealer would be willing to pay for it. The artist has long since gone to his reward, and the sketch perhaps belongs to that class sometimes advertised as "of no use to any one but the owner." Yet in this case the value to the owner is not small, chiefly on account of its associations, for Frank was my tent-mate.

The sketch is of an elegant stone mansion in the city of Atlanta, and as it stood just inside the city's defences the shells of Sherman's artillery had torn it through and through. There seemed to have been some reason for the treatment it had received, for in the siege of the city this large house, with its thick walls of stone, had formed a lurking-place for the enemy's sharpshooters from which to pick off our men. Therefore it had become necessary to dislodge them in this effective manner. I recollect, however, that it had a pleasant aspect to me, for here I found my messmates. The number of the band had been reduced by the absence of some on account of sickness, and of one member, John Simmons, who had been wounded and sent back to a hospital in Chattanooga, where he finally died of his wound.

This Simmons was something of a character in his way, and deserves more than passing mention. As we mingled so much, there came in time to each of us some nickname. That for John did not arrive until we came to Tennessee, and had done what all Northern boys do during their first autumn in the South—tasted green persimmons. The resemblance of the name, and his own pecu-

liarly acrid disposition, made the result a foregone conclusion, and he was known from that time as "*Per-Simmons*." But, as might have been expected, this did not sweeten his temper at all, and he remained the same.

Yet there was much more to the gray-haired man of Napoleonic features than this aggravating and combative personality which never tired of holding up to scorn and contempt what, with the keenest of satire, he termed "*T'e A-mer-ican soldier, who talks United States!*" The sarcastic reference to a boastful nation which is without even a national language was only one of the many thrusts of his rapier-like wit, which none of us were quite nimble enough to parry. He rarely more than tasted of spirits, but one day he had taken enough to break down his habitual reserve in regard to his own history, and he told me the story of his life.

He was born in Normandy, France, and I judged from various things he told me in connection with his family that they were of good means and position. He attended a German university, and while there became involved in some affair that ended in a duel. Opening his clothing he showed me the long sword-scar on his breast, which indicated

that the matter was something more than the fiasco that such affairs at German universities usually are. The duel had resulted in a break with his family, and after various adventures he had finally drifted into the French army. Eventually he enlisted in our regular army as a musician, where he served a long term of years; for lack of something better to do, I judge, for his education was not complete and thorough enough to be worth much as a breadwinner.

When he joined us in Baltimore he was about forty-five years of age, and his comparative failure in life, notwithstanding undoubted natural talents, easily accounted for the pessimistic sharpness of his tongue. There is nothing like confidence to win friendship, and from that time there was a bond between us that he did not have with the other boys, for I readily discovered that underneath all the sharpness of language there was a fund of generosity only lacking opportunity for development. I was very sorry that he had not fallen to my care when he was wounded.

We learned afterward of his experience at the hospital. He was told that it would be necessary to amputate his leg in order to

save his life. But life had already proved a disappointment, and this offer of being passed on into old age, a cripple dependent on charity, was rejected with impatience; and, as he was permitted to make his choice, he died a few weeks later.

Despite all the asperity of his tongue, the memory of his friendship abides with me still; but I doubt whether his real name was Simmons.

Soon after our arrival in Atlanta, Hood, who now commanded the enemy's forces in that vicinity, did the only thing he could have done to make it possible for Sherman to crown his campaign with completest success. With his whole army he started northward on a raid of his own, followed by three quarters of Sherman's army, but leaving to our corps the not unpleasant duty of occupying the city. But when Hood had gone well away from us, Sherman sent a portion of his troops to assist Thomas at Nashville, and returning with the remainder to Atlanta prepared for his most famous campaign.

I may as well add here that Hood continued his northward course until he actually laid siege to Nashville, where in due time he was effectually "dealt with" by Thomas and

from that time to the close of the war Hood's army was heard of no more.

It is said that in a cyclone there is a space of quiet and calm in the centre, and similarly our position was now central in the cyclone of war. The navy was pounding the enemy along the coast and up the rivers, where footholds had been obtained and enlarged at various points, while from Virginia to the West the tempest of war was raging north of us, but ours was, just for a little time, the centre of calm.

Our stay there, as far as our corps was concerned, was uneventful. There were occasional foraging tours into the surrounding country, and sometimes an alarm from the approach of a body of cavalry or mounted scouts. On one occasion the wagons of our division had been sent into the country eastward in search of forage, accompanied only by a small guard, entirely inadequate to defend it from a force of any size whatever. By some means a rumor reached camp that a force of the enemy's cavalry was in the vicinity and that our wagon train was endangered.

Immediately our regiment had orders to go to their relief, and we left the city at 4 P.M., taking the same direction and road that

the wagon train had taken. The band was ordered to accompany the regiment; not that music was so much needed, for we did not blow a note on the whole trip; but I suspect that our other services, which they were liable to have need of, were more thought of just then than music.

We marched until ten or eleven o'clock in the evening, and only went into camp because it was not easy to find and be sure of the road, and we were in danger of losing our way. We started again before it was fairly light, and following the road that the wagons had taken, which took a wide circuitous sweep around a section of the farming country, kept a furious marching pace until some time in the afternoon, when we reached Atlanta again. The wagons had returned safely from their circuit and reached camp just before us, for we had almost overtaken them. Since leaving camp we had marched over forty miles.

We heard of battles far to the north on ground which we had passed over, but that which interested us most was the approaching Presidential election. By a special arrangement it was so managed that each voter was permitted to enclose his ballot in an envelope, which was sealed and sent home to be opened

at the polls where he would have been entitled to vote if he had not been in the army.

As I had reached my majority since enlisting, my first vote, which was for Lincoln, was cast in Atlanta, but was opened and counted in my native town. By that election the people decided that the war was not "a failure," and the decision has never been reversed.

Nothing is more cheerful than a victorious army, and while it rested there were many who were quick to devise amusements. A group of Indians, who had enlisted in one of the Western regiments, were persuaded to give a war-dance in the evening. The thrilling Indian stories of my boyhood's literature were still fresh in my mind, and I expected to be thrilled now by the representation of the real, and by the real Indians too. But the disappointment was as complete as it was possible for it to be.

Was it because the performance was in a crowd in the centre of a city, whereas it needed the setting of a camp-fire gleaming up the towering trunks of forest trees and glistening on the bodies of naked savages, while the weird song was answered from the far solitudes by the panther's cry? Or was it that I had been surrounded by scenes so

much more warlike than any Indian wars could furnish? The death of an ideal is sometimes painful, but this sudden collapse of my ideal of an Indian war-dance touched my sense of humor instead, and I enjoyed a laugh that lasted far into the night.

There was a theatre, and this was soon taken possession of. Some of the company had possibly been connected with theatres before, but now they were all stars of the first magnitude, though the actresses were conspicuous by their absence. "The strong man" nightly tossed the cannon balls, catching them on the back of his neck, and allowed a rock to be broken on his breast by a sledge in the hands of "t' other strong feller," and with the help of the soloist, the clog-dancer, the impromptu comedy, and the inevitable minstrels, the time was filled, and a not over-critical audience was delighted.

At one camp I found a couple of trick mules who tossed the unsophisticated who could be induced to ride them by the light of the camp-fire, while at still another place a rude ten-pin alley had been constructed. The pins were termed "Rebels," and the balls used were some unexploded shells which our artillery had thrown into the city.



CHAPTER XX

MARCHING THROUGH GEORGIA

Evacuation of Atlanta—The City in Flames—The March Begun—Stone Mountain—Destroying Railroads—Immensity of an Army—Refreshing Change of Diet—Crowds of Slaves.

THE country about Atlanta is not mountainous, though eleven hundred feet above the sea, but is of a rolling surface and diversified by field and forest. The city stands exactly on the divide, where the waters flow in one direction to the Atlantic, and in the other to the Gulf. It is of even more modern growth than Chicago, and owes its importance and even existence to the concentration of railroads there. The same fact gave it also its prominent military importance, for railroads are as necessary a supplement to modern warfare as they are to modern commerce.

Soon after his capture of the city Sherman ordered all the inhabitants to leave at once. Those who desired to go North were furnished with transportation, and about twenty-five hundred availed themselves of this offer. The remainder were sent South under a flag of truce, and continued to link their fortunes with those of the Confederacy.

Sherman had started from Chattanooga with about one hundred thousand men, and up to the time of entering Atlanta his losses had been about a fifth of that number. Meantime he had received considerable reinforcements, and in turn had sent back a large number to assist Thomas at Nashville. There was now a final examination of the men, the invalids and weaklings were sorted out, and we then had an army of nearly seventy thousand men.

When all the preparations were completed, the railroad and the telegraph lines were destroyed, and for a month our friends could only hear of our whereabouts by stray information from the enemy. When Hood evacuated the city he destroyed property and stores to the extent of many millions of dollars in value, and now when Sherman evacuated it he ordered the remaining public

buildings to be destroyed, for war at the best is but a game of destruction.

It is probable that the flames spread—it could not have been otherwise in fact—and most of the city was consumed. We then started on a tour in which the destruction of property was unequalled in the history of the war. But it was not done wantonly. It was done as a military measure, for war, as Sherman forcibly reminded one of the Confederate generals who had undertaken to criticise some of his measures—"War is cruelty; you cannot refine it."

And again, writing to Charles A. Dana, he said: "To make war we must and will harden our hearts."

The campaign which followed achieved such a strategic success that it seems sure of posthumous fame in both history and song, being known in the former as "Sherman's march to the sea," and in the latter as *Marching through Georgia*.

On November 15, 1864, we broke camp, and turning our faces to the southeast began a march to—we did not know where. Little did I think when a few years before I looked at a picture of burning Moscow, which Napoleon said was the grandest sight the

world ever beheld, that I should so soon witness a similar one.

Reaching a little rise of ground at a distance from the city we halted for a rest, and turning to take a last look I beheld a column of black smoke ascending to the sky. Then another column of smoke arose, and another, and another, until it seemed that they all merged together and the whole city was in flames. Great beetling towers of smoke rose higher and higher; gigantic tongues of flame leaped out here and there, or serpent-like seemed to raise their heads and uncoil in the smoke; again they would run together and form sheets of flame which rose high aloft, and breaking sent fiery couriers into the sky. The jet black smoke of the southern pine, of which the city was mostly built, spread and thickened until it covered the sky and made the day dark.

“Forward, march!” and we passed on, leaving the “Gate City” behind, a city no longer—so it seemed to us then. And yet—for Truth is ever outstripping the wildest flights of Prophecy—the city was rapidly rebuilt in after-years, and a quarter of a century later the National Grange met there, the farmers of the South extending the

fraternal hand of greeting to the farmers of the North and West. Verily, we chose a good time in which to be born!

In looking over some old letters I am reminded of so many incidents in connection with the campaign which followed, and my Imp persists in crowding my brain with so many vivid pictures, that I hardly know what to select. I will quote a paragraph from one of the letters.

“Our first day’s march brought us to Stone Mountain, and here our whole brigade went on picket for the night. We spent the next day in destroying railroads, and so began our second day’s march after sundown, and finished it in time to eat breakfast and begin the third day’s march.”

Such experiences were not remarkable, but they may serve to give the reader a hint of how the boys sometimes managed to get so tired.

Stone Mountain is a village which takes its name from a remarkable mountain near at hand, which is about a thousand feet in height, and is seemingly one immense granite boulder. Its surface is so smooth that in only a few places have trees and bushes found

a foothold, and its sides are so precipitous that its summit can be reached from but one direction. Standing thus isolated and rising to such a height, it forms a very striking feature in the landscape. From there to the coast there is no other considerable rise of ground; in fact, the country grows more low and flat as you proceed, until it ends in rice plantations at the coast.

It must be difficult for one who has never seen an army, with all its supplies and accompaniments, to form an adequate conception of its size and the amount of country it covers. I am sure there were large portions of Sherman's army which I never saw during the year and more that I was with it. It was now organized in four infantry corps, each corps taking a road by itself, the four corps keeping about abreast of each other; the cavalry forming an advance guard, pushing out in front and in all directions. I remember that it took our corps about all day to pass one point, so not infrequently the head of the column would be going into camp before the rear had begun the day's march.

As the army was now separated and severed from all communication it became neces-

sary to march it in such order that not only the front and flanks, but the rear also, should be securely guarded. The accomplishment of this resulted in more or less night marching. There were pontoon bridges to be put down in front and taken up again when the army had passed over, and then to be got to the front again in time for it to cross another river. And again, troops which were at the front would be thrown out to guard the flank, and then bring up the rear.

I recall that all of one day and the night following, there was a terribly heavy rainfall, and it seemed to us that the roads would be impassable the next day, and we should get a day's rest. But the indefatigable "Old Tecumseh," as Sherman was nicknamed, had seemingly forgotten there was such a word as rest. Before morning ten miles of our road was corduroyed with rails, and orders were issued to the effect that every wagon which became hopelessly mired must be burned with its contents. "The army must move," were the concluding words of the order,—and we moved.

The softened roads caused by that rain made much wearisome labor for the troops, but it was a sight worth seeing, the energy

with which they labored. Sometimes the bottom of the road seemed to just fall out all at once, and a wagon would suddenly sink so deep in the mud that it was utterly beyond the power of the six-mule team to draw it out. Then a rope of some length would be attached, and perhaps two or three hundred men would line up on it, while the wagon itself would be surrounded by as many as could touch it or reach it with their guns. When all was ready the officer in charge would give the word. Then the driver would slash his whip and pour forth a strange profanity (for mule drivers were noted for their picturesque use of the language), and all would strain and shout.

Look! the wagon sways, it moves, the wheels bringing up great masses of mud; the mules are straining in the harness, every one is yelling and tugging. Now it lunges forward into another slough; now it rises again. Ah, here we are! It is on hard ground once more, and every one has paused to get breath.

But the place had to be mended, for there were other wagons waiting in line, so all ran to bring rails from the fence, and they were laid across the road in the mud to make a

flooring. Where the mud was the deepest they were laid in several thicknesses. A roadbed of rails or trees laid in that way was called a "corduroy." I remember one instance where the wheels on one side of a wagon had settled deeply in the mud, and the wagon had fallen over on its side. Impossible as it may seem, the wagon with its ton or more of freight was lifted upright and drawn out of the slough by human strength.

I believe, however, that there were a few instances in which the wagons with their contents were burned, in accordance with the orders, for they were so hopelessly mired that they could not be extricated without causing too much delay.

There is an old saying, attributed to the Duke of Wellington, I think, to the effect that "an army travels on its belly." The meaning of this homely adage is that an army is dependent, above all things else, upon food supplies. Hence the great prominence given in reports, orders, and military literature of all kinds to what is aptly termed "the base of supplies." In this campaign the country itself was made the base of supplies, and food disappeared before us as frost disappears before the morning sun. When

we marched at the head the country opened before us teeming with a wealth of domestic animals and harvested crops, all of which was manna to our cracker-and-salt-pork-wasted stomachs and scurvy-infested bodies; and I may as well say in passing that, in accordance with orders from headquarters, we promptly assumed proprietary rights in everything of the food kind.

But when it became our turn to bring up the rear of the army, the pleasant rural landscape seemed to have been swept by the wand of the Angel of Death. Stock and food of all kinds had disappeared, while buildings and fences were transformed to smoking ruins, and sometimes even the forests were in flames. Let the reader imagine, if he can, a strip of country "sixty miles in latitude,—three hundred to the main," subjected to such a visitation; it will be likely to give him a renewed interest in international arbitration.

Roads filled with wagons and artillery, with troops marching at the sides or through the fields, and followed by unnumbered crowds of slaves revelling in the fervent belief that "De day hab come," made a picture not soon to be forgotten.

But the thought of freedom was too great for some of the poor creatures to grasp. I remember one group of slaves who stood by the roadside looking wonderingly at the passing body of troops. As there was a halt for rest just as we reached that point, some of the boys entered into conversation with them. One asked them why they did not follow the army and go to the North. "You are free now, you know," the soldier explained.

"Free!" They could not understand it.

"Yes, Abe Lincoln has made you free; you can go where you please now, and your master can't stop you." They looked from one to another, and then one seemed to be struck by a bright thought.

"Guess dat would n't go down wid ole Marse!" he exclaimed, and they all chuckled and laughed in accord, for they thought they saw now that we were trying to joke them. So we left them, but as we were in the advance that day, and thousands of the freedmen were following on behind, they were probably convinced before night.

But not all of them were so slow in grasping the thought. In one of our night camps there was an old white-headed negro who went limping around from one camp-fire to

another, and the excitement of it all had fairly wrought him into an ecstasy of feeling in which he seemed to be contemplating himself complacently as being in some sort a prophet.

"De Lor' bless ye, boys!" he exclaimed, raising both hands above his crown of white wool; "I knowed it 'd come; I 's looked for it dis fifteen year, and I pray de Lor' I might live to see de day."

And then this Simeon of his race leaned heavily on his staff again and went tottering on into the night towards other fires, no doubt to again congratulate himself and call blessings on the Northmen because of the early fulfilment of his prophecy.





CHAPTER XXI

SHERMAN'S MARCH TO THE SEA

"Sherman's Bummers"—Writer Joins the Foraging Party—An Antique of the Race Course—Capture of Milledgeville—A Calaboose, a Church, and a Liberty Pole—Investigating a Prison-Pen.

IN connection with the food supply of this army a few words should be said here in reference to those erstwhile famous bands known as "Sherman's Bummers," for there seems to have gone forth an impression that they were an irresponsible set of pillagers. When we left Atlanta it was published far and wide in Northern papers that our wagons contained five months' rations, but this was probably intended to mislead the enemy, for from that time until we entered Savannah, a month later, not five days' rations were issued from the wagons.

To use the country as a source of supplies

became a necessity, and to provision his army in this way Sherman, not only in this campaign, but more especially in the subsequent Carolina campaigns, made use of a new organization which may fairly be said to have been his invention. A certain portion of each regiment was detailed to act as a foraging party, and was placed under command of a commissioned officer, who led his little band where he chose. Some of the parties would push out north or south of the army, and some would go directly ahead of it, and they would be absent a day or two, and sometimes several days.

It was these small bands of foragers (which, however, were perfectly legitimate military organizations) which received the nickname of "Bummers." This word, at first used in derision, soon took its place in the army vocabulary, and occasionally made its appearance in general orders. They brought in all manner of provisions, from sweet potatoes to beef on the hoof, and when they returned to the regiment whatever was brought in was turned over to the Quartermaster, and was issued by him in regular form. Sometimes a poor strip of country would be passed, where nothing but corn in the ear could be

obtained; but one may feel perfectly secure against hunger if he but have corn to parch in the frying-pan.

They started out on foot of course, but it was not many days before they had supplied themselves with mules and horses from the plantations, and thereafter might have been not inappropriately termed mounted infantry. The orders were strict not to enter private houses, but there were some stragglers, men who strayed away from their commands to pillage and destroy, and to this irresponsible class must be attributed the burning of houses, and other wilful acts of destruction.

Provisioning the army was only one of the benefits realized from this organization. Its effect was to surround us with an extremely active and aggressive advance guard, which kept the enemy in ignorance most of the time of what our army was doing, and, in fact, of its exact locality. The complete independence of action of these small bodies enabled them to outstrip even the cavalry, which moved under orders from headquarters.

There was one instance of this which I remember hearing of at the time, and as I have since heard General Kilpatrick tell the same story, it may now be considered as

vouched for, and better entitled to a place in history than some things that have found one there. I ought to prelude by saying that we were not confronted by any considerable body of the enemy, but bands of their cavalry were continually hovering about, seeking to delay our progress by burning bridges and felling trees across the roads, especially where they passed through swamps.

There was a certain bridge over a large river which Sherman was very desirous of saving from being destroyed. To accomplish this, General Kilpatrick, who was in command of the cavalry of Sherman's army, took personal command of a considerable body of cavalry, and pushed forward by forced marches, night and day, hoping to surprise the enemy and secure possession of the bridge in time to prevent it from being burned. As they approached the vicinity of the bridge he heard the sound of firing, and hastening his command with all speed he rushed to the scene. Judge of his surprise when he found the bridge already in possession of the "Bummers," who with a thick-set skirmish-line were holding the enemy at bay. Upon his approach he was recognized and hailed by an irreverent private, who shouted,

"We've got the bridge; come on 'Kil' and help us hold it."

The General used to tell this story with a great deal of relish, for such delightful forgetfulness of rank by volunteers under stress of emotion never gave him the least offence. With the regular troops it could never have happened; and it is possible also that with the regular troops the bridge would not have been saved. These skirmishes with the enemy were of frequent occurrence with the "Bummers," and sometimes a whole detail would be surprised and captured.

As the *personnel* of the detail was changed from time to time, I one day volunteered my services as "Bummer," and they were promptly accepted. The horse assigned to me was tall, thin, and gaunt, "old as the hills," and withal was as blind as a stone. The saddle was a sheepskin strapped on, but as I was accustomed to bareback riding I did not mind the trappings. We left the camp before daylight, and after travelling some distance reached the main highway. We had not proceeded far on this before we found the detail from another regiment was on the same road. It soon became apparent to every one that the body which succeeded in getting

ahead would have the first foraging in a fresh country, though of course they would also run the first risk of capture; this last item, however, was not considered at the time.

Without a word of command there soon began a furious race on that broad sandy road, and presently the two details were intermingled for miles along the highway, while horses and mules were being urged on by the wildest shouting and whipping. I now discovered that my mount, which looked so unpromising when at rest, was in reality an antique of the race course, and doubtless had a lineage as proud as that of Kubla Khan. As a matter of fact, I had left the camp with the last of the column, and by the time I had reached the main road and had grasped the situation, the head of my command was already in the race and probably far ahead of me.

But the resounding hoofs, the whipping and shouting, and other reminders of race-track days soon woke the spirit of "Old Steeplechase," and we began to pass the other riders as an ocean liner passes sailing craft. I found I had no use for the nail that I had carefully fixed in the heel of my shoe to be used as a spur. All might have gone well,

but rounding a turn in the forest-lined road, I suddenly discovered directly in my course a man who had dismounted from his mule and was fixing his saddle.

Alas, my fleet but blind craft failed to answer to the helm, and there was a collision, two men and two animals being scattered on the ground, and barely escaping the hoofs of the oncoming multitude. The horse scrambled to his feet in fright, and with an agility born of necessity I recovered my place on his back, and we sped on, but I have sometimes wondered since how long that man of the mule continued to use such language as was filling the air when I left. Even with this hindrance, long before the officer in command called a halt after some fifteen or more miles of racing, I was at the head of the column.

We now waited an hour for the stragglers and slow mounts to come up. The competing body were not to be seen, and they had probably turned off on some other road. As we were now entirely beyond the army, the command was drawn together and kept in a better defensive attitude, flankers being put out where the lay of the country permitted. Some time in the afternoon we turned off the main road to a large plantation, and here we

found the supplies we wanted for the regiment. Not a white person was visible, but several slaves were about the place. We gathered quantities of smoked meat and bags of meal and corn from the outbuildings, and, piling them into the farm wagon, found we had quite a wagon load.

I was armed only with a pistol, but the men had their rifles and ammunition, and pickets were at once posted about the place. Not only did we stay there that night, but on the succeeding night also. When on the third day we set out to look for the regiment, we had several wagon loads of food supplies which we had gathered, with the plantation teams to draw it, and we had to go back some miles to meet the army. Even after getting into the army again it was no easy task to find that portion of it where our regiment was, and it was night when we reached it, but the supplies were much appreciated.

We arrived at Milledgeville, then the capital of the State, November 22d, and the place was surrendered by the Mayor. This stately event of surrendering a country village, "inhabited by women and niggers," as the wag remarked, to an army of seventy thousand, was unusual, and to us it seemed

entirely unnecessary. But we were not to be outdone in ceremonious courtesy, it seemed, for the troops entered the town in proper form, with martial tread, while the Mayor on the court-house steps reviewed the procession. Ours was the lead that day, and we headed the column playing *Yankee Doodle*. His Honor neither praised nor criticised the selection, but then,—his eye may have caught sight of a fat Pekin duck which I was carrying in my left hand while I played with my right! It was one that I had picked up a little way back,—perhaps on the Mayor's plantation, who knows?

For some reason we remained near Milledgeville during the following day. It was the only day's rest we had between Atlanta and Savannah, and a most fortunate rest it was to me, for my physical condition at the time was such that probably this opportune halt saved me from completely giving out. It was a very cold day, especially so we thought for November weather in Georgia, water freezing in pools all day. But the opportunity for rest was appreciated, as was also the duck, which, after being picked and stuffed with brokenhardtack, was nicely roasted over the fire, poised on a spit of green wood.

This place was about the last of the good country,—from an agricultural point of view, I mean,—for from this point eastward the farm land grew less in area, and the swamps grew more extensive, until near the coast it became “a dreadful hungry country,” as one of the boys called it; but it was not so much the country as it was the army that was hungry.

The town of Eatonton presented a scene which has ever since been to me a source of much perplexity of thought on the intricacies and mysteries of human nature. The scene was this:

A church, and near at hand a calaboose, which is a place where some men had made it their occupation to whip slaves for their refined and genteel owners,—and towering above the calaboose was a “liberty pole.” Religion in fact; liberty in theory; slavery in practice. How shall we explain it?

It will perhaps assist us if we are reminded again that the acts were not of men, but rather were the natural outgrowth of the institution of slavery, for we must remember that since the coming of King Demos nations no longer stand in danger from men; the rôle of tyrant has passed now to institutions

instead. The modern danger to the Commonwealth was clearly prophesied by Thoreau as being "that some monster *institution* would at length embrace and crush its free members in its scaly folds." Happily, by the outcome of the war one monster institution was laid at rest, but barely in time to save us from being crushed in its scaly folds.

"But the inconsistency!" you exclaim; "the emblem of liberty raised over a calaboose, and both presided over by the church!"

Yes, certainly, but let us suspend judgment, for we of the North had our inconsistencies, and the next generation—aye, and the present perhaps—may pronounce us all equally inconsistent in some other matters.

I am afraid that it never occurred to those who fell victims to the barbarities of the Southern prison system to draw comfort by philosophizing on the remote cause of their misfortunes. The system referred to is already so severely condemned by the better sentiment among themselves that at the present day not one of their number has the hardihood to attempt to defend it. It was a losing game for them, for although it cost us tens of thousands of good lives, yet the

spirit which it awakened in the North when the animus of our foes was once understood was such that from that time on their ultimate defeat was never for a moment in doubt.

We passed one of these prison pens on December 3d, which gave us an opportunity to investigate its interior and exterior arrangements. The record of the fact that in the Northern army prisoners never received insult or injury is an everlasting testimonial of the better civilization bred under free institutions.





CHAPTER XXII

END OF THE MARCH

A Song by the Camp-Fire, and what Followed—A Strayed Premonition—How Railroads Were Destroyed—Capturing a Steamboat—In Front of Savannah—Rice Plantations—Lumber for Winter Quarters.

IT was about two weeks after we left Atlanta before the army itself came in contact with the enemy, and then only in a skirmish. The band had gathered as usual about its camp-fire one evening, where we expected company at any time, for the musical talent included in the group attracted many first and last, until it had become a tacitly understood middle-ground in the gulf 'twixt commissions and ranks.

On this particular evening the Sergeant Major—as it happened, a stalwart Scotch-English blend who stood six feet two and

handled a sword much more gracefully than he did his *h's*—was the first to arrive and drop on the carpet of pine needles. He had not been there long before he removed his pipe from his mouth and began to sing. This surprised me, for I had never heard him sing a note before; but his voice was a rich baritone, though uncultivated, and he sang fairly well. None were loth to listen to good singing at such a time, and he sang on and on; love song, drinking song, and camp song following in succession. At last he paused, and, reaching for a brand to relight his pipe, dryly remarked:

“Hi don’t knoo what ’s got *hinto* me to-night. Hi ’ave n’t felt so bloody-mooch like singin’ since Peach Tree Creek. We moost be a-goin’ to ’av’ a fight to-morrow. Hi halways feels like singin’ the hevenin’ afore a fight.”

As it happened, the next day while we were entering Sandersville, our brigade being in the lead that day, the enemy’s cavalry opened fire on the advance guard immediately in our front, my own regiment being in the firing line, and as we entered the village playing a patriotic air, a slight shower of lead whispered over our heads. I saw two or

three wounded, but I do not remember that any of our men were killed. But the enemy left a few of their dead behind, one soldier in gray being stretched at full length on the porch of the village church. Though the firing was lively for a time our line never paused in their forward sweep, and the flurry was soon over.

It was hardly enough of a skirmish to be called a "fight," but perhaps it was sufficient to preserve the self-respect of that "bloody-mooch" desire to indulge in song which had manifested itself on the previous evening. A few centuries ago such an occurrence would have been sufficient material for the making of a legend and a romance combined. Now, however, the element of superstition seems to be so far outgrown by the common mind that the matter caused almost no comment, and I only remember it as a curious incident that no one thought of attempting to explain.

A *bon mot* which seemed to be much more in keeping with the spirit of the time was perpetrated by a facetious comrade, who remarked that Sandersville was well named, for it was the only place thus far that gave indications of having any "grit."

With the skirmish ended there was a halt

for dinner, and now began a running to and fro through the village and surrounding farms in search of provisions. I succeeded in overtaking a hen, but in decapitating it my hands and face became spattered with blood. There was no water near except in wells, and I did not care to become a comedy star by returning to the line in that plight. So, thinking only of procuring a basin of water for washing, and never once reflecting on the incongruity of the act, I stepped on the back piazza of one of the houses and knocked gently at the door.

It opened, and there was disclosed within a group of women, in ages ranging from fifteen to fifty, I judge, and the whole group stood transfixed with terror at the sight of my blood-smeared face and hatchet. Had I come to murder them, as I doubtless had others? My appearance was certainly in evidence against me.

I had a sudden feeling of embarrassment at having intruded in that rude manner and frightening the family, but I could not retreat then. So with such politeness as I could summon I asked for a basin of water. One of the girls, perhaps eighteen or more years of age, with a womanly quickness of percep-

tion, seemed to be the first to grasp the situation, and, coming forward, she took down a basin, and dipping some water from a pail with a gourd dipper, brought it outside and set it on a bench.

I murmured thanks, and something about being sorry to make so much trouble (oh, how ridiculous the conventionalities seemed in such a case!), and her grave, frank face actually relaxed with a little smile while she went in again and soon returned with a clean towel, which she stood and held in waiting for me to take. I will not say that I completed the washing and wiping in haste, for the reader would not believe me if I did. It was necessary for me to explain that we had no regular rations, and were therefore obliged to live on the country, and that I hoped the passage of the army would not entail great loss upon them, etc.

She responded to it all with politeness, and continued to converse with a well-bred tact that put me more at ease, and left me in no doubt of the fact that she was a lady. Possibly the sudden revulsion of feeling from that of terror made her forget for the moment that I was part of an invading army whose errand was destruction, and gave a little

flavor of friendliness to her conversation, for the reader must remember that what she probably thought was a battle had just been fought before her eyes.

When I finally took my leave, it was with a mutual exchange of good wishes, each for the other, but as I turned to take up the dead fowl, a queer feeling came over me, and I had half a mind to leave it where it lay. Then I reflected that it would probably be my last opportunity for the day to get food, and—hunger got the upper hand of sentiment, and the fowl went with me.

This was the only glimpse I had throughout the whole march of a white family in their own home, and I never ceased to hope that they might have no worse cause for fright than the one I gave. Yet, whenever after that I thought of the appearance of the country at those times when we had brought up the rear instead of being in the van, the thought was not a pleasant one.

I told Frank what a hard chase I had after the fowl, and he congratulated me upon my success in foraging, but remarked that I had been gone long enough to have chased the chicken half-way across the State. It was dressed and neatly packed away in the

haversacks until the night camp should give us time to cook it. For dinner we had common field corn parched in the frying-pan, but I had hardly swallowed a handful of it before we were ordered to again resume the march; the hour of nooning had somehow slipped away.

I am reminded here of another incident in our brigade that seemed to have a bearing on the subject of premonitions, of which I spoke a short time ago. A certain sergeant had been in no less than fifteen battles and had never experienced any special dread, or "a feeling of premonition," as he expressed it, though he had once been slightly wounded. But at the approach of the very last battle in which his regiment was engaged, the battle of Bentonville, North Carolina, he was overcome by a feeling of impending death. He was not in the least superstitious, but try as he would he could not throw off this feeling, and having a little time he sat down and wrote a letter to his family. Sealing and directing it he took it to his lieutenant, and requested him to send it if he, the sergeant, should not survive the battle. He then explained to the lieutenant his presentiment, and that he could not throw off the feeling of impending death.

"God help you, Sergeant, if you feel so," replied the lieutenant, putting the letter in his pocket, "but I am as sure of going home to my family as I am that the sun will rise."

The lieutenant was killed in that battle, and it was the sergeant who lived to tell me about it all and finally go home to his family.

As I have intimated, this was more a campaign of labor than of fighting. The country was full of swamps and streams, more especially on the latter half of the journey, bridges were destroyed and roadways were obstructed by having trees felled across them. An army of that size can live well in a country teeming with plenty as long as it keeps moving, but if Hood, instead of his wild-goose chase to Nashville, had remained in our front, we should have been starved out. As it was, the bridging of streams and swamps, corduroying roads underlaid with quicksand, removing obstructions of all kinds, and dragging wagons and guns out of the mud with ropes was an immense labor and more wearing on the men than the easy distances marched.

The destruction of railroads, when it was thoroughly done, was a laborious task. The interruption of traffic for a few days was not

sufficient. We were cutting the Confederacy in two now, and the railroads, its great arteries, must be so thoroughly destroyed that they could not be repaired.

A regiment would line up on one side of the track, and taking hold of the rail and ends of the ties, would begin to lift it up. Presently it would be standing on the ends of the ties, and as it began to go over at one point the men would let go, and, running behind the others who were still lifting, grasp a new place and continue the raising. When once started in this way, the track, rails and ties together, would be slowly rolling over like an immense furrow of sod rolling from some giant plough.

"Now surely the railroad is destroyed," the novice would say. Not at all, for it could easily be put together again; the ties must be burned. These, however, could be replaced by an army of slaves; the rails themselves must be made useless. This was accomplished by piling up the ties with fence rails and dry wood, and across each pile would be laid perhaps a dozen of the iron rails. The burning of the ties would heat these, and while they were red hot each rail was twisted by the use of a peculiar wrench.

A bent rail can be straightened, but a thoroughly twisted rail can never be used again, and the Confederates had no source from which to replace them.

As the campaign continued the constant foraging, destroying railroads, and skirmishings grew almost monotonous, except that as we approached the coast food grew scarcer while the swamps to be waded grew wider and deeper. A few days before the end of our march, Captain Gildersleeve (now Judge Gildersleeve of New York), while in charge of the foraging detail in search of food, touched the Savannah River at a point several miles above the city. While here they discovered a steamboat coming up the river, and hailed her with orders to "Heave to." The boatmen, however, put on all steam, and it continued its course, they evidently hoping to get out of range. But a few bullets through the pilot-house caused the captain to change his mind, and a white flag was shaken out. When she was pulled to the shore a small body of Confederates was found on board. These were placed under guard and taken away as prisoners, but the boat was burned where it lay.

It was soon after this that our brigade was engaged with a small body of the enemy.

They had erected earthworks and resisted our advance with some show of force. When a line was formed for the attack our position was not immediately in front of their works, but was on the flank. The resistance was not formidable and the works were soon in our possession, with a few prisoners who preferred to stay and end their military service by being taken. Our position in the line prevented the regiment from taking an active part in the skirmish, but we had an unpleasant experience in that we were obliged to wade through a rice swamp where the mud and water was nearly leg deep.

The river is very broad in its lower course, and is subject to the rise and fall of the tide. The land is much of it so low that the rice plantations are only protected from the encroachments of the tides and freshets by a system of dykes. But instead of the Holland system, which pumps out the water from the low-lying farm-lands, these dykes have outlets through which the water escapes at low tide, but which are automatically closed by swinging doors in such a way as to shut out the rising tide. Near the city the river separates and flows in different channels, enclosing thus low-lying islands which are miles

in extent. Each island was a rice plantation surrounded by its dykes with tide gates, and fortunately there was there in store some rice, which was soon needed.

On December 8th we took up a position in front of the city, and "Marching through Georgia" was at an end. Our camp was established in a beautiful grove of live-oaks on the bank of the river a few miles above the city. The exquisite beauty of that brief camp remains with me a sweet memory in these New England winters. The ground was thirty or forty feet above the river, level and free from bushes, and the majestic live-oaks with their foliage of dark green leaves overhead furnished a canopy to what seemed a vast cathedral. Their sturdy trunks, with large low limbs which spread gradually outward and upward in regular curves, gave the curious effect that, gaze which way you might, you seemed to be looking through a vast succession of Gothic arches spanning vaulted aisles that radiated from where you stood; and all were hung and draped in wondrous profusion with the long Southern tree moss, which gave the scene a hoary and enchanting effect.

We began here to build winter quarters of

boards and logs, using our little tents for roofs, for the thought of more permanent accommodation continually haunts, like a mirage, the soldier's life. As may be surmised, material in the way of boards soon became a rare article, for they were only to be obtained by tearing down some sort of buildings, and a few of us, having secured a boat, determined on an excursion in search of lumber. Getting an early start in the morning we rowed easily up the river several miles above our lines, until we came to an island plantation. It was entirely abandoned, which was fortunate for us, for we had only the little hatchets which nearly all soldiers carried. As it was on the Carolina side of the river it had not been exploited by foragers, which was another piece of good fortune for us.

The "quarters" were little cabins built of boards of the Southern pine, and it was not difficult for us to take some of these apart and carry the boards to the water. As the tide was out we built a raft on the mud, and while we waited for the returning tide to float it we went in search of food. But there was none to be found except some rice in the hull, and and of this we procured considerable.

Northern readers will need to have it explained that rice when it is threshed from the straw is not the beautiful white kernels of the rice of commerce. Each white kernel is enclosed in a yellow husk, giving it much the appearance of barley. So tightly does this hull cling to the kernel that it can only be loosened by being pounded in a mortar. As we had already learned so much of the industrial peculiarities of the crop, we were not slow in appropriating a large iron kettle we found here, and adding it to our cargo, for we could use this as a mortar.

About the middle of the afternoon all was ready for the start. The raft with its freight was swaying on the flood tide, and we attached it to the stern of the boat and attempted to tow it down the river, but it proved to be a most obstinate hulk, and would go nowhere but with the current. So we held a council of war, with the result that it was decided that myself with one other should remain on the raft and go down with the ebbing tide, but the others were to go ahead with the boat, and while preparing supper should watch for us, and come out and tow us in when we had drifted opposite the camp.

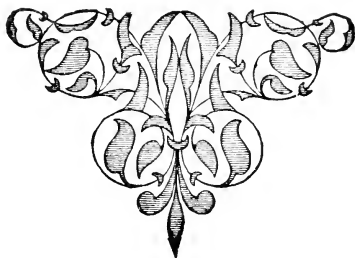
I had a more verdant faith in human nature before that episode than I have had since. They were only too glad to go ahead to camp, and being soon busily engaged about their supper, never watched for us at all.

We two who were left procured some long poles, and as soon as the tide had turned boarded our craft, and pushing it well out into the muddy river waited for it to carry us down; and as we waited darkness settled around and enclosed us. We shoved well towards the south shore, and drifting faster and faster finally came in sight of the army camp-fires. Just above our own camp was a point of land projecting into the river, and upon this landmark we depended to find our way, but as we swung round it the current carried us far out into the channel, and we could not touch bottom with the poles.

Here was a predicament, for our unmanageable craft was sweeping us towards the Confederate lines, which were but a short distance below, with the now rapid current. We splashed and paddled furiously with our poles, and just as we were preparing to abandon the raft and swim for safety, the poles again touched bottom, and we soon

pushed to the shore and along in the eddies up to our camp.

We found the rest of our party enjoying a comfortable smoke after supper, and it is just possible that we reverted a little to the Saxon in explaining our sentiments.





CHAPTER XXIII

CAPTURE OF SAVANNAH AND INVASION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Army Suffering with Hunger—Enemy's Prudent Retreat—Unparalleled Campaign—Journalistic Enterprise—Crossing the Savannah into South Carolina—Cold Weather Again—Skilful Manœuvring—General Kilpatrick's Adventure.

WITH the lumber secured we proceeded to the building of the winter quarters, but as it happened we did not enjoy them long. In a few days Fort McAllister, on the Ogeechee River, was captured, and this opened mail communication, but did not suffice for a "cracker line." During the last two weeks of our march the country had grown poorer in the matter of supplies, for as the swamps had grown broader the arable land had decreased. As soon as we halted in front of the city food disappeared from the

surrounding country in a twinkling. A little additional was obtained from the rice plantations on the river, but that also soon vanished, and we were confronted by an enemy more imperious than the Confederate army.

A little corn had been saved for the mules, for it was imperative to keep them alive, but it became necessary to place an armed guard over them while they ate or the corn would be stolen. Major Smith's compassionate heart was so moved by the sight that each day when he'drew the few ears of corn allowed for his horse he divided it among the men most in need, letting the poor beast eat twigs, moss, or anything else. He never recovered from the moss and brush diet, and the good Major was obliged to get a new horse soon after. Many times I have seen men searching the dirt where the mules had eaten their corn, to pick out the scattering kernels one by one and save them for their supper.

The city was peculiarly well situated for defence against assault, one side fronting on the broad river, and the other sides being nearly surrounded by a morass too wide to be quickly bridged and too soft to be walked over. Its fortifications, looking out across this barrier, seemed absolutely inaccessible.

It was about ten days after the arrival of the army in front of the city that a large portion of our regiment was ferried across the river in flat-boats to watch the enemy, who were seen to have pontoon bridges connecting the city with the South Carolina shore. Here our men were confronted by a considerable body of Confederates, with whom they had some skirmishing for a few days, losing several killed and wounded, Colonel Ketcham being among the latter. He was crippled by a shot through the thigh.

The enemy were seen to be leaving the city and crossing the bridges in considerable numbers, and it was thought that if we gave them time enough they would all retreat by that way. But the army was really suffering for food, and it was decided that an assault must be made at all hazards. Quantities of tall Southern cane was cut and tied in bundles, which were to be carried forward just before the break of day and laid in the mud to form roads over which the charging forces could cross the swamp in front of the works.

It promised to be a bloody task, and the morning set for it was December 21st, but during the previous night, having perhaps got an inkling of our plans, the remainder of

the enemy quietly but very hastily left the city, retreating northward on the pontoon bridges our regiment had been watching, across the Savannah River into South Carolina.

Comparing its results with its cost, Sherman's march to the sea stands unparalleled among the campaigns of the war. By cutting the Confederacy in two, destroying long lines of railroads, crippling its internal resources, and approaching the rear of forces then confronting the Army of the Potomac, thus effecting what is known in military parlance as a "concentric movement," it was a mighty factor in bringing the rebellion to a close. In accomplishing these great results the army lost in killed, wounded, and missing less than one per cent. In other respects also the campaign brought us great gains, for the enemy left behind in their flight valuable stores and a large amount of artillery.

Up to the very last day of their occupancy the *Savannah Republican* was published and sold on the streets, but so sudden was the departure of the Confederates that the office and publishing rooms, with all their material and machinery, were found perfectly intact

by our troops in the morning. Yankee enterprise seemed to be always on hand. Ready writers dropped the musket, and assuming the pen began to furnish copy; compositors who could set type as readily as they could load a rifle were summoned from the ranks, and by afternoon the paper was sold on the streets without having missed an issue.

It announced the evacuation of the city by the Confederates the night before, and the consequent occupation by Sherman's army, with the change of editorship and proprietorship, and naturally also there was an editorial statement in regard to a "change of attitude" upon national affairs. Can the boastful spirit of modern newspaperdom give a more striking instance of journalistic enterprise?

The city of Savannah fronts the river on a towering bluff, and as I remember it 't is a city of beautiful monuments, beautiful avenues and boulevards, revelling in the luxurious shade trees of that climate. As one stands on the bluff and looks northward into South Carolina, there are long reaches across the river channels with enclosed islands miles in extent, and beyond on the mainland the

horizon is lost in the forest covering of those seemingly interminable swamps.

Our objective point was now the rear of Lee's army in Virginia, but between ourselves and that point were hundreds of miles of low-lying swampy country, with streams all running at right angles to our necessary course, and just at that time too there were heavy rains, putting the whole of that coastal plain in a state of inundation. Such a condition of things would have made it difficult to continue even the ordinary vocations of peace in that half-drowned land. How then was a whole army to traverse such a country in midwinter, with all its munitions, and hindered by bands of cavalry as well as by the citizens who burned bridges and obstructed roads by every possible means? I think it was the opinion, both North and South, that the attempt would not be made.

But Sherman was then flushed with success, and he made light of difficulties and dangers that would have daunted almost any commander at an earlier stage of the war. Perhaps also he realized that the merciful war is that which is made the shortest—at any cost. I doubt, however, if the plans could have been successful, even with his

indomitable energy, had it not been for the modern form of improved pontoon boats.

In these the boat was a framework covered with cotton duck. When the cloth was removed the frame was taken apart, and the whole could then be loaded on wagons and transported much easier than the boats formerly used, and the small amount of water which found its way through the duck was easily removed. The ready and expert handling of these bridges, enabling them to be quickly put in place and as quickly taken up and loaded on the wagons, was an art in which the Engineer Corps became very accomplished.

A marked feature of this campaign, as of the previous one, was the great number of slaves which literally swarmed to the army. Of these a large and efficient force was organized to assist the Engineer Corps, as they were ready users of the axe and spade; but simply as a military measure, on account of the prospect of a scarcity of food, the General was obliged to exclude large numbers of them and prevent their following us.

January 16, 1865, we crossed the river on the same pontoon bridges that the Confederates had escaped by, and which in their haste

they had left already in place for us. They were made on the immense river scows so much used on the tidal rivers there, and, of course, could not be readily transported; but left in position for us, they proved to be quite an assistance. Two days' march brought us to Sister's Ferry on the Savannah River, and here we waited for a week, for the Confederates now confronted us in some force, and it became necessary to wait until the body of the army was well across, enabling it to invade the country with a good defensive front and form.

Let no one suppose that "the sunny South-land" is always sunny, or that it forever caresses the cheek with the soft breath of warm zephyrs. During the week of our stay here the weather was very cold for that climate, as in fact it had been during much of our stay in Savannah. Sometimes water would freeze half an inch thick in a night, and as our clothing had become much worn this campaign caused more suffering from cold and wet than anything we had experienced.

In that whole two months' tramping and camping from Savannah to Raleigh, my recollection of the landscape is of a dreary

succession of forests of Southern pine, and of swamps where the doleful cypress trees were standing in the water; and in area the latter seemed to greatly predominate. Perhaps they left that impression because they were so much more troublesome in passing. There were occasional oases of plantations with their long rows of little log cabins for the slaves, known as "quarters." One of these plantations had been devoted—so the overseer told us—to raising slave children for market. There were nearly three hundred slave women, and a dozen or two slave men, about the place.

South Carolina looked poor from an agricultural standpoint, but the same means for provisioning the army were used here that had proved so successful in Georgia; in fact, the system of foraging begun in the latter State was here carried out by a more complete organization on the same lines. The State probably suffered more from the invasion than Georgia did, and this for several reasons. For one thing food was scarcer, and the country had to be more thoroughly gone over and ransacked in order to supply the army. And then, too, there was a more marked hostility on the part of the few re-

maining inhabitants, and the openly expressed opinion in the ranks that, as South Carolina was the first to secede and was the most active in promoting the war, if any State had to suffer by it, she should be the one.

Of his foragers while in this State, Sherman says, with just a suggestion of humor: "A little loose in foraging, they did some things they ought not to have done; yet on the whole they supplied the army with as little violence as could have been expected." But the sober fact was that a strip of country many miles in width and reaching across the State from south to north was stripped of fences, buildings, farm animals, property and food of every description, though I never heard of a case in which violence was offered to citizens.

We were not now, as in Georgia, without an army to confront us, for the Confederate General "Joe" Johnston had collected some of the remnants of Hood's defeated army, and probably some forces from other parts, and was disputing our progress at every stream and swamp. This General Joseph E. Johnston is considered by some critics to have been the most able general in the

Confederate service, not excepting Lee. He commanded the army which confronted Sherman in the Atlanta campaign in 1864, and he resisted our advance towards that city with acknowledged skill. Had he not, upon Jefferson Davis's order, been superseded by Hood, it is quite possible that Sherman's success would not have been as complete as it was.

There were frequent skirmishes along our front, and there is a picture of one of these which my Imp continually thrusts before me, but the name and locality he has lost. The scene is of a far-flung skirmish-line where the men are wading among the towering tree trunks, nearly leg deep in water, and loading and firing as they advance. It was characteristic of these swamps and flooded lowlands that they were crossed by roads and causeways, with bridges spanning the channels, and it was this which made their passage in the face of an enemy so difficult.

The flooded condition of the country made the continual moving of pontoon bridges a wearisome task. Sometimes men would be ferried across, and when enough were on the other side they would throw out a skirmish-line to hold the enemy at bay while the bridge

was being placed. It was always necessary to have the bridges guarded, both while being placed and when being taken up.

One day, when we had marched in a pouring rain since early morning, we did not get into camp until evening. We were tired and hungry, thoroughly wet, and quite disposed to think that General Sherman was an unreasonable man, and that our lot was a hard one. But while we were making some remarks bearing upon this view of the situation another regiment passed along without stopping to camp. Upon inquiry it transpired that this regiment had yet to go fourteen miles farther in the rain, and then do guard duty at a pontoon bridge which must be in place before morning.

All at once our spirits rose to the point of cheerfulness; our lot was a pleasant one, after all,—comparatively speaking,—and a camp in the towering forest, lit up by fires of the sooty pitch-pine, is n't bad, even if it does rain. Human nature is the same always. Comfort and luxury are elastic terms, and depend for their meaning mainly upon comparative conditions.

Probably much of Sherman's success was due to the skilful manner in which he handled

his troops, continually misleading the enemy as to his real destination, and in this he was no doubt greatly assisted by his foragers, who hung about the army like a cloud. He first threatened Charleston with a considerable force, then threatened Augusta in the same manner, but finally passed with his whole army between the two places. The same method answered his purpose all the way, continually threatening the places he did not mean to strike, while the main part of his army moved by other roads.

In these "demonstrations" of course the cavalry formed the active element, because of their ability to move rapidly from one point to another. The traditional idea of the cavalryman as one who rides furiously into the enemy's ranks, slashing their heads off right and left with his sabre, is not a true picture of the service rendered by that branch of the army in modern warfare.

In actual combat, since the coming of the long-range rifle, the use of the sabre is as rare as the use of the bayonet. In fact, the cavalry now does most of its fighting dismounted, and formed in line like infantry. But with us they formed the advance-guard, actively pushing out to find and "feel" of

the enemy, and General Kilpatrick, who had command of Sherman's cavalry, was the most active and energetic of commanders, often being in the thick of the fray himself, as was evidenced by the fact that he was several times wounded.

In one of the advances of the cavalry he made his camp for the night in an advanced position, and in the darkness a band of the enemy captured his headquarters and all his papers, he barely escaping to a swamp with only his sword. He soon discovered that most of his guard had also escaped, and under the cover of darkness he rapidly formed a line in the woods. The enemy were so busy looting the baggage that they were surprised in turn when with his few men he made a dashing charge, and he succeeded in recapturing his camp.





CHAPTER XXIV

TRAMPING AND FIGHTING IN THE CAROLINAS

The Burning of Columbia—Explosion in Cheraw—Turpentine Factory in Flames—Battle of Averysborough—“*Animis Opibusque Parati*”—A Little Panic Soon Ended—Bentonville, the Last Battle.

OUR corps passed several miles to the west of Columbia about the time that it was burned. I shall not attempt to decide the much-vexed question of “Who burned Columbia?” but it was currently reported in the army at the time that our troops had found the city to be on fire in several places when they first entered. This and the fact that the streets were full of quantities of loose cotton blowing here and there in the high wind which prevailed at the time made its destruction certain. It was also said that the soldiers found large quantities of whisky there.

When we consider that from this capital of South Carolina there had emanated for years the most vile abuse of Northern men, and especially of Northern soldiers, we must concede that our Southern friends were not wise in leaving so much inflammable material of various kinds around loose.

At one of the camps the water obtained seemed foul, and when boiled gave out a distinct odor of decaying animal matter. The slaves about there explained that the water came from "Rotten Rock," and was not fit to use. They directed us to a spring a mile away, where we obtained pure water. This was before it was generally known that in some parts of the State there are immense deposits of fossil remains, and I have since wondered whether it was those remains that tainted the water. They are now mined and used as a source of supply of phosphates for fertilizers.

By March 6th we had traversed the State of South Carolina, and arrived at Cheraw on its northern boundary. We were not the first to arrive, by some days, fortunately for us, perhaps, for the Confederates had here concealed several tons of powder in a pit, carefully covering it over. But it somehow

managed to become ignited, probably from the camp-fires, and the resulting explosion killed several of our soldiers and completely wrecked the town.

We crossed into North Carolina the next day, and soon encountered a characteristic war scene in the "Turpentine State." This was a tar and turpentine factory in flames, and at the distance of fifteen miles the banks of black smoke rising against the sky looked like the approaching body of a tempest.

Our line of march led close to the fire, and there was a weird and almost supernatural effect in the vast seething and roaring body of flames, which, shaded and partially hidden by the masses of sooty smoke which covered, or, lifted by the wind, alternately veiled and revealed the endless blue columns swaying with the long swinging stride which became such a marked characteristic of the men who marched down to the sea; in the long bugle peal and rumbling artillery with chaffing horses; in the glimmer of muskets and sabres; and in all to be heard and seen only by glimpses under the smoke, and muffled by the Niagara-like roar of the flames as they licked up the turpentine and pitch in the great vats.

It was a frequent custom for the men to while away the march by singing, and there now came rolling back from the depths of the pine forest the chorus of thousands voicing the stately measures of the authorless war hymn:

“John Brown’s body lies a mould’ring in the
grave,
John Brown’s body lies a mould’ring in the
grave,
John Brown’s body lies a mould’ring in the
grave,
His soul is marching on.”

At once a prophecy and its fulfilment.

By March 16th we had reached the vicinity of Averysborough, at which place there was a battle where our regiment was engaged, and where we lost several men. The enemy were found strongly entrenched here on a neck of land between swamps, from which it seemed impossible to dislodge them by direct attack.

But a brigade was sent by a long detour to their right to attack the position in flank, while our cavalry moved around to their left. While the enemy’s force was diverted by these flank movements our line made a

vigorous attack on their centre, but did not immediately capture the position. The battle raged with some fury until nightfall, and when at daylight our line again moved forward to the attack, their entrenchments were found to be empty; they had retreated in the darkness, moving their forces eastward, as we afterward learned.

Among the souvenirs in my daughter's museum is a relic, a brass button bearing the figure of the Palmetto tree, and underneath it the State motto, "*Animis Opibusque Parati.*" Heroic motto, heroically exemplified!

It is a trifling thing, but when I take it up my Imp at once thrusts before me the picture of a portion of this field on the day after the battle; a portion which had been occupied by a Confederate battery. There were dismounted guns, a number of dead horses, and other indications that the battery had suffered severe punishment. The dead soldiers had been buried, but from an artilleryman's gray jacket, which appeared to have been torn by a shell, I took this button.

The story of this battery interested us somewhat at the time, though how it reached us, whether through prisoners or over the

vidette line, I cannot now tell. It was from South Carolina, and during the whole four years of the war they had been in and about Charleston, and had not fired a gun for their cause. At this battle, though, just at the close of the war, they were permitted to take part, and fired one volley. Battery M, of the 1st New York Artillery, the battery which accompanied our division, sent a shell in answer to their volley, which wrought such havoc with the Palmetto battery that they never fired again.

This destructive shell from Battery M had pierced their caisson, where the ammunition is carried, and the resulting explosion had killed many men, officers, and horses. So their opening volley was their last.

This conflict of a day at Averysborough was not a large affair, in comparison with the numerous sanguinary conflicts which had preceded it. It was, however, the first considerable engagement that the infantry of Sherman's army had with the enemy after leaving Savannah. It was fought entirely by our corps, the Twentieth, and the loss in killed and wounded aggregated about six hundred.

But however insignificant a figure it cut in

the matter of losses, or numbers engaged, it was an important battle because of the critical situation in which we were placed. Even a temporary defeat while we were thus isolated from a base of supplies might have been a serious thing. And then, too, there was the constant danger that Lee might elude the watchfulness of Grant, who confronted him at Petersburg, Va., and stealing away unobserved, join his army with that of Johnston, and with the combined force overwhelm our toil-worn trampers.

It is easy to tell of what might have happened, but that which did happen in Virginia was that Grant's vigilance made it impossible for Lee to get away unobserved, and when he finally attempted it he was promptly surrounded and his army captured.

That which happened in North Carolina was that the Confederates, disheartened by many defeats, were not successful once, but were out-generaled, out-fought, and defeated in every encounter.

After this battle we took up our march eastward, in the direction of Goldsboro, which is on the Neuse River. A few days after leaving Averysborough, while we were quietly tramping along at the usual marching pace,

I saw far up the road a horseman riding furiously toward us. He was an orderly sent on some hasty errand from headquarters, we supposed, and hence he attracted little attention.

Soon we heard the sound of artillery in our front, followed by the roar of small-arms. This had also become such a frequent occurrence of late as scarcely to cause comment, except speculation as to who was "in it." But now we noticed pack-mules being urged to the rear, soldiers and camp-followers of all grades running after them, some of them hatless, and a baggage wagon bumping furiously over the rough road as the driver lashed the mules and yelled strange oaths.

At once I understood the situation. I had never seen a panic, but I knew this was one, and hence it was possible for it to be a serious affair.

A panic is an unreasonable and unreasoning fright, and when it seizes on an army it becomes positively infectious and irresistible. No matter how well some may keep their heads, the very fact that the great body of the troops have lost the bonds of discipline and the power to reason, and have in fact become insane for the time being, puts every

one in danger. It was this which defeated our raw and undisciplined army in the midst of success at the battle of Bull Run in the first year of the war.

But this army with its experience of long service had become immune against undue fright, and the panic, as the late Artemas Ward would have said, "as a failure was a success." We halted at the side of the road, which for a little time was filled with a struggling mass of soldiers, horses, mules, and wagons, but the scramble was soon ended, and every one who had been concerned in it looked ashamed.

The advance-guard that morning had encountered a small force of the enemy, and driving them rapidly back had suddenly and most unexpectedly come upon the whole Confederate army in a well defended position, and were themselves assailed in turn. They had gone forward with so little suspicion of danger that they had been accompanied by a considerable body of stragglers and camp followers, mostly officers' servants, all intent to forage in search of food, and so eager that they kept well up to the front. It was these stragglers and foragers who were responsible for most of the confusion, for, when the

troops were suddenly repulsed, it was they who became so panic-stricken as to endanger the welfare of the army.

But reinforcements came, and, as it had been at each place before, the Confederates were defeated and driven out of their works. Falling back, they now established themselves in a new position, this time near Bentonville. At this place they were attacked a few days later, and in the battle which ensued the enemy were again thoroughly defeated; it was Sherman's last battle. In this battle we were well towards the extreme left of our line, and as soon as the position was taken we immediately began to cut the timber in our front and put up a breastwork of logs.

In a defensive position in a forest this cutting of the timber for a considerable distance in front is important, for it not only prevents an attacking body from having any concealment of their movements, but the entangled trunks and limbs of fallen trees make a very effective barrier to hinder an assaulting force, and to hinder and delay an assault when its forces are well under fire is usually to defeat it.

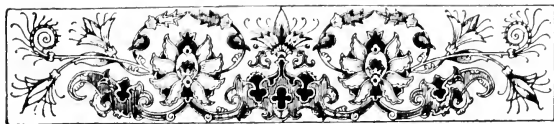
We were not attacked in this position, but the regiment did some active skirmishing

along our front, for the enemy repeatedly attacked the skirmish-line hard enough to find out that it was there and ready to offer resistance. At one time three or four of the picket reserve brought a man back to the regiment in a blanket. As he was carried we supposed, of course, that he was hard hit, or had at least as much as a leg broken. But when the doctor examined him the only injury to be found was a flesh wound,—a bullet hole through the muscle of the upper arm.

This would not usually prevent a man from walking a limited distance, but he was very young—only a boy in his 'teens—and the loss of blood with exposure to a cold rain had so wrought upon him that with the nervous shock he was prostrated and lost all strength.

This was our last encounter with the forces of the Confederacy, and we soon after went to Goldsboro, and thence a few days later to Raleigh.





CHAPTER XXV

THE DAWN OF PEACE

Surrender of Lee and Johnston—Rejoicing Interrupted—Lincoln and Seward—Through Richmond and over Old Battlefields—A Vast Bivouac of the Dead—Washington in Mourning, but Exultant and Rejoicing—The Grand Review.

NOW the army soon became filled with the wildest rumors flying from mouth to mouth. Lee's army was said to be marching south to join with that of Johnston, and with the combined forces to overwhelm Sherman. Again it was rumored that negotiations were pending between Lee and Grant, looking to the surrender by the former of all the Confederate forces then in Virginia; it seemed too good to be true. But at last it was definitely made known that Lee's army, the one army of the Confederacy which had successfully held its ground through the

whole war, had really surrendered, and this meant of course that the war was virtually over.

It may have been true that we were worn down by the long winter's campaign, but now we became suddenly unconscious of it, if such was the case, and were filled anew with life and vivacity. We should surely now reach home, we thought, before the expiration of our three years, which would not be for six months yet.

The crowding of great events was thick and fast now, and it was soon made known that there was some sort of armistice between Sherman and Johnston, with a view to the surrender by the latter of all the Confederate forces then in North Carolina. At last it was definitely stated that the terms had been agreed upon, and only awaited approval by the authorities at Washington, and the necessary technicalities of red tape.

Now surely we could rejoice, and rejoice we did without stint. Why should we go early to bed? Rest was to fit us to endure the hardships and fatigue, but now there were to be no more hardships and fatigue. Peace had come. There was plenty of wood; why should we not have huge fires lasting far into

the night and lighting up the forest like a fairy-land? Though they were no better than the usual small fires, and not nearly as comfortable to sit around, they were much more in keeping with our feelings, and in fact served as one method by which to express them. So the large fires we had, and shouted with delight when the flames rolled the highest.

The Signal Corps of the army of course had a great amount of the material of their branch of the service on hand, and they now joined in making the nights resplendent. From all the neighboring hills the rockets trailed their fiery veils across the sky, crossing and recrossing with their red glare, and bursting scattered showers of white, red, green, and golden stars above the camps.

But just as our rejoicing was at its highest there came flying through the camps a dark and unbelievable rumor, yet it was soon substantiated, and was all too true. President Lincoln and his Secretary of State, Hon. William H. Seward, had both been attacked with murderous intent. Lincoln died in a few hours, but Seward eventually recovered.

Some years thereafter, in company with Joel Benton, the poet and essayist, a very

pleasant time was spent with Seward in a social visit.

A jagged and ugly-looking scar on his neck still showed the track of the assassin's knife. He may have seemed to us to take life quite too seriously; but if so, what wonder? For with all of his remarkable talents—he was accounted by many to be the greatest statesman of his day — his noblest ambitions seemed to meet with nothing but disappointment, and not the least of his trials was the obloquy he was then sharing with President Johnson, and all through no fault of his own. Because of the deficiencies of a man not fitted to fill the high office of President, but whom, as President, Seward was too noble to desert, the blows of public censure fell thick and fast on the devoted Secretary of State.

It might have been more dramatically fortunate for him had the villain succeeded; the two martyrs would have been enthroned together in the memory of later generations, and none may doubt that the stabs of the assassin were less painful than the thrusts of political enemies.

But history has been kinder than his contemporaries, and Seward is now recognized

as the man who, more than any other one person, jointly with Lincoln bore up the honor and safety of the country through four long years of as critical a period as any nation ever passed through.

Yet he was not one of those great men of whom it is written that they are "privileged to be unprofitable companions." On the contrary, we were received on our visit with the greatest cordiality, and he evidently tried to make it enjoyable to us; certainly in this he succeeded.

Some time ago I was reminded afresh of these incidents by finding, among the papers of an old estate, a document of the date of 1839, which bore his official signature as Governor of the State of New York.

As if the news of assassination was not a sufficient dampener to our jubilant spirits, there came trailing after, the word that the terms of Johnston's surrender had not been accepted at Washington, and that hostilities would at once be resumed. Seemingly to give it emphasis we had orders to march at once, and packing our knapsacks again we took our place in the marching column, which was moving in the direction in which the enemy was supposed to be.

But this last act of the war drama was drawing rapidly to a close, and its culminating events could not long be delayed. Before we were given an opportunity to again come in conflict with the Confederates another halt was ordered, and now the news spread that Johnston had really surrendered, this time accepting the same terms as those accorded to Lee by Grant.

At last the war was really over, but we could not rejoice as we did at first, for there was constantly present in our minds the tragedy of the White House. Yet we had become too much accustomed to tragedies to be long depressed by them, and the army was soon in excellent spirits again, though public demonstrations were at an end. Soon the orders were received for the home march, and with faces set towards the north we trudged patiently on, for there was yet a long tramp before we should even reach Washington.

The distance from Raleigh to Washington does not seem very great when viewed on a map of the United States, but it is nearly as far as the distance we had already come from Savannah, which had occupied the army for two months. But the conditions of the

march had more to do with it than the distance. There no longer existed the necessity for keeping the army in a defensive attitude, and the whole surrounded by a strong guard every night.

Now at night each brigade, with its wagon train, just filed into the fields or woods, wherever they happened to be when darkness came on, and went into camp. There were no laggards when reveille sounded in the morning, for all were eager to push on, when each day took us a day's march nearer home.

Occasionally the roads would become crowded, for in the eagerness to push forward which pervaded all branches of the service, the wagons would sometimes crowd ahead and fill the road, perhaps driving two or three abreast. Then the infantry would betake themselves to the fields and woods until intercepted by a swamp. When this happened some would crowd into the highway again, struggling with the mule teams and quarrelling with the drivers, while other regiments would make long detours, around the swamp or to find a passage through it.

The army, as a whole, seemed to feel the close of the war as an immense stimulus to exertion, and the effect of the high spirits in

keeping up the physical strength was simply wonderful. There was evident an entire indifference to fatigue, and we now began to make the longest average marches of any that we had made in the war, ordinarily covering from twenty-five to thirty-five miles per day when there were no hindrances.

But everything had to make way for the pontoon train when it was ordered to the front, and it would go rattling merrily past. When it reached the place where the bridge was needed the wagons were unloaded with shouts and laughter, and the various parts were put together and the bridge constructed with a rapidity only acquired by long practice. The men whistled and sang as they worked, for there was no danger now of interruption by an unseen enemy who might be on the other bank of the stream.

Our corps, the Twentieth, together with the Fourteenth Corps, formed what was known as the left wing of Sherman's army. It happened at one time on this homeward march that the two corps were obliged to take the same road, and there was much good-natured rivalry as to which should have the lead. By dint of getting started before daylight and keeping the road so full that

nothing could pass us we managed to keep ahead for several days. But one night the Fourteenth Corps must have marched all night by some roundabout way through the woods, and got to the main highway ahead of us, for after we had got our usual early start we did not go many miles before we found they had supplanted us on that road.

There was a certain plantation where a good-sized wagon-house stood with broad doors to the highway. With this inviting surface for a "canvas," some budding Angelo, who may have since saluted Fame, had made a charcoal sketch, which was, to use a comrade's expression, "As large as life and twice as natural."

The symbolism of the picture it was not difficult to understand; it meant that the Twentieth Corps was *not* ahead on that day. The fun of it was that from its conspicuous position, the whole of our corps were obliged to march past it and see it. But everything was taken in the best of humor, and jokes, even on ourselves, never came amiss.

We saw nothing of the paroled and scattered remnants of the Confederate army on the way, but pushed steadily forward until we reached Richmond, crossed the river, and

passed the famous Libby Prison. Thence as we climbed the city's seven hills and threaded its streets we passed the house where General Lee was then staying. He had been standing in the front door but a short time before, silently and sadly watching the victorious army as it passed, but he had stepped inside and closed the door just before we reached that point, and the drawn curtains of the windows gave us no glimpse of the famous occupant within.

From Richmond our march took us over some of the old battlefields of Virginia, first those of the Wilderness and Spottsylvania Court-house. The uncanny scenes presented by these fields a year after the battles seemed like desolation itself, though food for the buzzards, and for the wild hogs that roam untamed and unowned in all Southern forests, had long since vanished. There were mounds with sunken centres, where evidently many had been buried together, and only slightly covered at that, for portions of the skeletons protruded from the soil. But there were thousands still unburied, lying where they fell, skeletons in belt and buckler, their white bones peering from blue uniforms, in this vast bivouac of the dead.

“No rumor of the foe’s advance
Now swells upon the wind:
No troubled thought at midnight haunts
Of loved ones left behind:
No vision of the morrow’s strife
The warrior’s dream alarms,
No braying horn or screaming fife
At dawn shall call to arms.”

But wild Nature never mourns for man, its subduer and ruler. Birds were trilling their springtime melodies to their mates as ever, while the nest-building went merrily on; field-mice nested among the faded tatters of blue, and perhaps anon gnawed through the leather cartridge-box and smelled of the mouldering powder and grease-covered leaden balls, wondering what new products Dame Nature had provided for her children; while over them all the fields and woods were being clothed anew in blossoms and green.

Was it sodden brutality for our army to thus leave its dead unburied? Nay, but rather an appreciation of the realities of war, and of the supreme necessity of devoting the army to its prosecution, rather than to occupy the time in covering with mould some deserted tenements. So these fiercely contested fields and woods, suddenly abandoned by

both armies, were left to the kindly offices of Nature. But it is pleasant to think that all the remains were soon afterward removed to the National Cemeteries near Washington.

How different all this had been conducted under Grant from what it was at Antietam, under McClellan, in 1862.

There were portions of these famous conflicts where the firing was so continuous and heavy by both sides that large trees standing between the lines were literally cut down by the leaden hail. I examined one tree in particular, an oak about twenty inches in diameter, which seemed to have been chipped and slivered by bullets from the ground up ten or fifteen feet, until it had finally fallen over. How this could have been done in regular battle I do not yet understand, but there lay the tree prone on the ground, and there was the mutilated stump. When I next saw this stump, it was standing in the Government Museum at Washington.

The battlefield of Chancellorsville also presented a similar spectacle, though it was then the second year since that battle was fought. It was here that a member of our brigade found the remains of his brother where he left him lying dead in that hasty retreat two

years before. He was enabled to be certain in the identification by some peculiarities of the teeth.

At last we passed that sad State, once called "The Mother of Presidents," but which had now become world famous in ways less to be envied, and had reached the Long Bridge leading to Washington. Now came the "Grand Review," as it was called, in which the two largest armies of the war passed in review in successive days before the President, and before a city full of friends and visitors. Unavoidably there was a certain incongruity, or mingling of emotions, for the nation, while rejoicing in peace and victory, mourned the untimely death of our good Lincoln, and as the years rolled on there was more and more cause to mourn the loss of his wise and guiding hand.

Column after column passed the reviewing stand, not with the quick and mincing steps of militia, but with that far-reaching, swinging stride which had carried its men around and through and over the Confederacy, from the Mississippi to the Atlantic, and northward to Washington again.

As the artillery rolled along Pennsylvania Avenue, its rumbling seemed the long-drawn

echoes of the innumerable conflicts of the years gone by. The cavalry, with the horses' manes clipped to the crest, rode stirrup to stirrup with an alignment as perfect as that of infantry, and many a nicked and stained sabre was carried proudly to shoulder that day.

Then followed the ambulances, with the old blood-stained stretchers hanging on their sides, and the rumbling of their wheels seemed like a vast ghostly procession of the shrieks and groans of that great host of suffering ones, representatives of the nation's blood sacrifice, who had ridden in them, many of them to their last resting-places.

And so at last we passed beyond the city, a city wreathed and draped in black, but exultant and rejoicing as well, and went into camp, awaiting our turn to be mustered out of the service.





CHAPTER XXVI

THE HOME-COMING

A Brief Review of the War—Regiment again at Poughkeepsie—Only a Fragment of the Original Membership Join in the Home-Coming—An Honorable Record—Dutchess County Welcomes its Veterans.

AS I have said, I am not writing a history of the war. The utter futility of any effort to comprehend such a thing in one little volume would be seen at once by reference to the vast array of statistics on the subject. But as columns of figures seldom convey any adequate impression to the understanding, let me use one illustration.

If a lecturer should attempt to describe all the conflicts of the war, and for that purpose should devote even one minute to each battle or skirmish on land or sea, he would be compelled to speak continuously for sixty minutes in each hour, and six hours each day for five

or six days. Each of these conflicts cost human lives, sometimes only a few, and sometimes several thousands.

And yet, while not writing a history of the war, it may not be inappropriate to give a brief *résumé* of its progress towards its final successful issue, in order that the reader may keep in touch with events in the order in which I have related them. To those in the East who kept their gaze fixed on the armies in Virginia, which struggled during the whole four years most of the time in one State, the Government seemed to be making no progress, but a comprehensive survey of the whole field leads to different conclusions.

At the outbreak of hostilities in 1861 the antagonists confronted each other on a line which may be roughly outlined as following the Potomac and Ohio rivers, and passing through Missouri and the Indian Territory. The remainder of the first year was mainly occupied by both sides in making preparations for the war, which all now saw was unavoidable, and the hard fighting done was inconsiderable in comparison with that which followed. Yet at its close most of the Southern ports were blockaded, and the Confederates had been driven from that portion

of Virginia that lies west of the Alleghanies. The loyal citizens of that section immediately made application to be separated from the remainder of the State, which was done, and the State of West Virginia was created.

The year 1862 saw great portions of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri wrested from the enemy.

In the year 1863 the Mississippi was opened and the only effective territory left to the Confederacy was the Atlantic and Gulf States south of the Potomac and east of the Mississippi. The Government forces had also obtained an increased foothold at various points on the coast. Though blood and treasure continued to be wasted by both combatants west of the great river, yet it was waste in the fullest sense of the term, for it had no effect either way upon the progress or result of the war.

In 1864 Sherman's campaign from Tennessee to the coast made such wide-spread destruction of railroads and other property that another great piece was won from the Confederacy, and the only effective resistance remaining was in Virginia and the two Carolinas. The Southern leaders now began to realize that their empire ambition was like

the prisoner in the fabled "Iron Chamber," a prison cell of iron, which was so ingeniously arranged that the sides periodically folded and reduced the dimensions of the prison until the unfortunate prisoner was finally crushed in its folds.

When, therefore, in January, 1865, our army was swung across the Savannah River and began its devastating march northward, it was the beginning of the end, for it was approaching the rear of the last large army of the Confederacy, the one then confronting Grant in Virginia. Sherman says of this campaign: "This march was like the thrust of a sword towards the heart of the human body; each mile of advance swept aside all opposition, consumed the very food on which Lee's army depended for life, and demonstrated a power in the National Government which was irresistible."

On a June afternoon in 1865 there drew up to Main Street Landing at Poughkeepsie the steamer *Mary Benton*, and down her gang-plank and up Main Street marched a body of soldiers, bronzed and sunburned to the last degree. It was all that remained of the "Dutchess County Regiment."

It had been strengthened by the enlistment of new men from time to time, and once a portion of another New York regiment, which had been disbanded, had been merged in it. But of the whole number who marched down Main Street with us in 1862, how many marched up the same street in 1865, I have not been able to ascertain, yet it was but a small fragment of the original one thousand.

Of the others some had been discharged for disability, while many were still lying in hospitals with sickness and wounds. Some had starved in Southern prison pens, and some, exchanged, had come home to die. The dead were buried at Gettysburg, and in Maryland and Virginia. Some were slain by the rifles of guerillas in Tennessee, and from there to Atlanta their graves form a continuous line over the whole route.

A few fell in the skirmishes from Atlanta to the sea, and more in the siege of Savannah and the skirmishes in the Carolinas. On the battlefields of Averysborough and Bentonville rest our dead, and they were buried also from the hospitals of Alexandria, Washington, Baltimore, Nashville, Chattanooga, Kingston, and perhaps others.

Our experience was not unusual, either in hardships endured or the numbers lost, but the regiment had an honorable record, having accomplished every task assigned it, and never once in its whole term of service did it take part in a retreat.

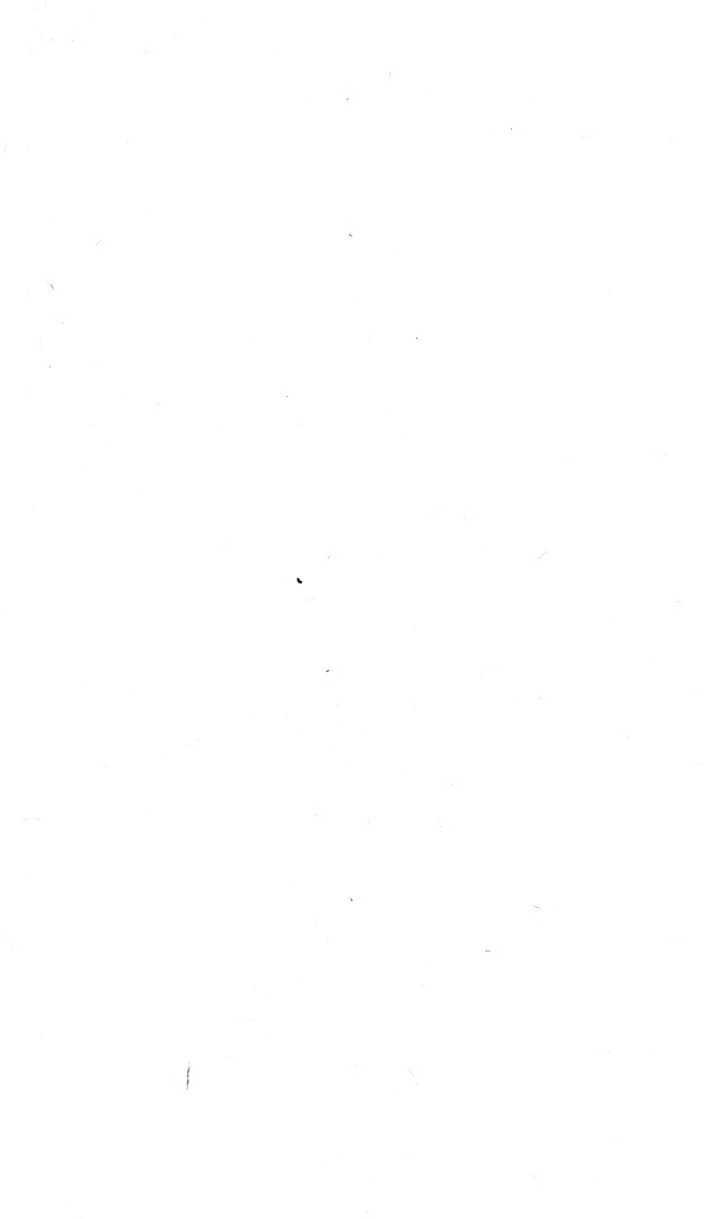
The corps to which it was attached, the Twelfth (afterward designated the Twentieth), had a remarkable record, for it was the only corps in our whole army from whom the enemy never captured a cannon or a flag. At the grand review at the close of the war they swept past the reviewing stand with every gun and flag in place.

Ours was one of the few regiments that was permitted to return and be mustered out in its own State, and that fact drew out to welcome us even greater crowds than had bidden us farewell when we started for the seat of war.

Of parading the streets, which were fairly canopied with banners and mottoes; the spread in the park; the tears of joy for the living and of sorrow for the dead: all these are incidents of peace, and may be omitted from an account of war experiences.

THE END

W. J.



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taken from the Building**

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